

Examiners' Report/ Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2010

GCSE

GCSE Business Studies (5BS02) Paper 01

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PE Report On Examination Paper 5BS02/01

General comments

This was the first series for the new Unit 2 controlled assessment. This method of assessment represents a significant departure from coursework, both in terms of how it is completed by centres and candidates, and in how it is assessed. It is fair to say that some centres had not adequately grasped what is involved in controlled assessment, relying instead on candidates producing something similar to what had been done for coursework. The intention of this report is to highlight to centres how preparation for controlled assessment and candidate performance can be improved in 2011.

Controlled assessment is completely different from coursework. If approached in the correct manner, it is an opportunity for candidates to work independently and to demonstrate original thinking on a particular Business theme. As such it should be a fundamentally more rigorous learning activity than coursework. It should involve less work for teachers when compared to coursework. QCDA guidelines prohibit candidates from being able to draft and re-draft their work, and to thus impose additional work on teachers. Once controlled assessment is completed, that is it. Centres must acknowledge that, given this new framework, they are unlikely to get the same distribution of marks that they did under coursework, where marks were often bunched towards the higher end. For controlled assessment expect to see a more normal distribution of marks across the ability range.

A summary of controlled assessment is as follows:

- Candidates have a choice of 5 investigation titles. New titles are published each year. It is recommended that centres allow students to have a choice of question rather than impose one on them.
- There are 4 elements to the assessment criteria - Research, Presentation, Analysis and Evaluation
- The investigation is to be carried out under controlled conditions. Research should be up to 6 hours under low levels of control. The write-up is 3 hours and under conditions of high control. The specification and Controlled Assessment Guide provide further detail.
- The investigation should be of a small business.
- It is recommended that candidates should investigate a different business

I wish to emphasise the assessment criteria and explain to colleagues how they need to be interpreted, for there are some centres that are misinterpreting the criteria. A number of centres' work had to be moderated down this year, and this invariably was due to a lack of understanding of the criteria or the nature of controlled assessment. In a small number of cases, work was marked using the criteria from previous coursework units.

For 'Research' note that there is no expectation that candidates will collect both primary and secondary data. The criteria descriptor makes no such requirement. The key terms in the descriptor are '*selectivity*' and '*focus*'. Has the candidate selected information from their research which is appropriate to the question and allows them to be able to answer this question? For Level 4 (7-9 marks) work must demonstrate '*good selectivity*'. For Level 4 the research must have, '*high-quality organisation ...and focus*'. These descriptors should encourage candidates to avoid providing

unnecessary detail about the chosen business - such as its history or location - or the business theory that is pertinent. This information is not required in any depth. In short the moderators do not require lengthy descriptions of the business itself (a short introduction is sufficient to place the business in context) nor are explanations of methodology required. Similarly with photographs and maps. Candidates can by all means use these, but only if they help to address the question. In one investigation on customer satisfaction in a family-run hardware store, the candidate had included on page 1 a photograph of the inside of the store. They made no attempt to explain the photograph. However, it clearly showed that shelves were well stocked, that paint tins were organised into colour groups and were facing in the right direction, and prices were clearly shown. The candidate could have made use of this image to help address the question. They did not do so, but instead seemed to include the image for aesthetic reasons.

Similarly, there is no simple formula to award marks for the number of sources that have been used. It may be that if the candidate has investigated an entrepreneur to ascertain the role that creativity and initiative has played in the business, then the main source of research is likely to come from an interview with the owner. Different strands of information are likely to be drawn from this interview. In this case the need for a '*wide range of sources*' can be interpreted differently to an investigation into the extent to which a business targets different market segments (which is likely to provide opportunities for gathering more information). A 'wide range', could therefore, be more than one source in this instance.

For 'Presentation' candidates are rewarded for presenting their findings in appropriate methods and in terms of their, '*attention to detail*'. For some investigations this may involve presenting statistical data using charts and diagrams. Where an interview has been carried out it may involve relevant quotes being used in the write up. Organising work into appendices, and making reference to this section, is also an effective method of presenting information. A crucial point to remember in this respect is 'does the way the information has been presented help you, the reader, to understand what the candidate is trying to say in relation to answering the question? As with research, there is no 'formula' for this part of the criteria - it is not the amount of charts, tables, graphs, quotes etc. that have been used but how they are used to help the analysis demonstrates (note the link in the criteria between presenting information and data and analysis).

For '**Analysis**' it is essential that candidates make use of their research information to address the particular investigation question. When candidates conduct surveys, they need to be clear on why they have asked a question and how the answers to these questions help them to address the question they are trying to answer. How do their questions link with the relevant concepts and theories that are integral to their investigation? The impression gleaned is that candidates feel it is vital to include some form of questionnaire, produce graphs and/or pie charts and then to talk about their findings in general terms with little or no value added being made whatsoever by so doing. The better candidates justify the questions asked by showing the links to the relevant concepts and theories and by including their rationale in the appendices and by referring to each question's validity in the analysis of their findings. Analysis is demonstrated where candidates identify reasons, causes, consequences, key points, issues and factors.

For '**Evaluation**' it is important that the analysis of research data should inform the conclusion candidates arrive at. Some candidates seemed to have already decided on the answer to the question without taking sufficient consideration of what their

findings indicated. Note also that the descriptor for Levels 2-4 states that, '*... (some/feasible/detailed) suggestions for improvement are identified, where appropriate to the task*'. For some investigations this will not be 'appropriate to the task', and candidates need to be aware of this. For example, this year's title on customer satisfaction did not require any suggestions as to how this might be improved; it asked candidates to consider what is the most important factor in helping the business deliver customer satisfaction. The part of the descriptor that states, "...where appropriate to the task" is clearly significant. Candidates do not need to do this for every title; it depends on which title is chosen.

It must be stressed that candidates need to be marked on where they demonstrate the criteria and in this respect they **MUST** answer the question set - not one which the teacher has suggested they answer or what they would like to answer. For example, the question on 'Initiative and determination' required candidates to frame their answer in relation to **the entrepreneur** in the business they had chosen. It did not require candidates to draw a comparison between two or more entrepreneurs (and certainly not a simple inclusion of biographies of Sir Richard Branson, Sir Alan Sugar and Anita Roddick!). Business is a dynamic subject and it would be nice to think that students can be exposed to different entrepreneurs than the above examples (especially since they are not involved with small businesses and one of them is now dead.)

A frequent observation from the moderating team relating to the annotation of candidate work. This was often lacking, or of insufficient detail to be of much use for the moderator. It is essential that work is adequately moderated. (See comments below)

There is no expectation or requirement that candidates will word-process their work. We understand the pressures that some centres are under in accessing ICT facilities for controlled assessment. Some of the best work we saw this year was hand-written, and this is no impediment to securing high marks.

What was done well?

Some centres are to be commended for their approach to this new type of investigation. Moderators saw some excellent, original work from centres that had clearly embraced the new approach.

- **Choice** - the most success came from centres where candidates had been given a free choice of the titles and were able to find a business to investigate. Note that businesses need not be unknown to candidates, but more often than not those for which some contact is already established. Many used businesses which family or friends owned, or where they worked. One memorable piece was an investigation into how the family window cleaner - a sole trader - delivered customer satisfaction.
- **Range of businesses** - it is clear that this year, thousands of small, independent businesses have been investigated by candidates. From a moderator's point of view this has been a refreshing change from what coursework had often become. From the student's perspective, these investigations are much more meaningful and valuable as learning experiences.

- **Organisation of work** - many candidates organised their research into appendices at the end of the investigation, and these were referred to through the write-up. In some cases the use of footnotes was used to aid the reader.

Areas where centres can improve their practice

- **Choice of titles** - centres are encouraged to offer candidates a free choice of investigation titles. By encouraging a spirit of independent work and ownership, candidates are able to engage with their investigation and produce more meaningful findings. Claims from centres that they only offer one title so they can, 'keep control of the process' misses the point of controlled assessment and potentially penalises their candidates. Our advice is, 'be brave!' Let candidates choose a title and find a business to investigate. Candidates and families can be very resourceful when finding businesses to investigate. Forward planning is vital in ensuring that appropriate small businesses can be identified.
- **Too much structure for candidates** - for some centres it was clear that candidates had been provided with too much support. In the most extreme cases, all candidates had done the same title, for the same business, and had used the 'writing frame' provided by the teacher. In some cases the writing frame and guidance notes were actually incorrect, indicating that candidates needed to find primary and secondary sources, needed to provide a summary of the history of the business, and so on. In these cases candidates were effectively penalised by not being allowed to think through their own investigation, but to follow the inaccurate guidance from their teacher. Centres giving candidates writing frames or detailed guides on how to answer questions is against the regulations.
- **Answer the question** - some candidates lost focus of the question during their investigation. They should constantly be asking themselves, '*Have I answered the question and provided a justified conclusion?*' Given the time available, candidates only need to identify three to four (at most) key factors and then focus on these along with a conclusion drawing their analysis and evaluation together. Quality not quantity is vital.

Annotation of candidates work

The annotation of the work was often limited and did not provide much help to moderators in understanding how the marker had arrived at the levels and marks. It should be remembered that the marking for CA is for the benefit of the teacher/marker and the moderator and not for the student since the work cannot be drafted and amended. It is suggested that when judgements are made and supporting reasons/consequences/causes/issues/factors etc. are given by the student that these are identified in some way by the marker so that it becomes clear whether high levels of analysis and evaluation are being consistently demonstrated throughout the work. Appropriate annotation is a requirement of the Code of Practice and centres must note that where appropriate annotation is not included, work will be returned to the centre for annotation to be added. There will be an example of a piece of student work which has been appropriately annotated which will be published on the Edexcel Business 2009 web site - centres are advised to look at this and adopt the suggested approach.

- **Research folders** - there is no expectation that candidates submit their entire research folder. The best practice is where appendices are used which contain the specific information that is referred to in the write-up. This helps the moderator to cross reference the research marks given by the teacher/marker.
- The title of this Unit is 'Introduction to Small Business' and as such, the focus of the controlled assessment should be on small businesses. There were a number of centres who persisted in using Tesco, Marks and Spencer, Blockbusters, B&Q, Sainsbury's etc. These businesses may have been appropriate for coursework but are not for controlled assessment. If centres are unsure about whether a business is appropriate or not, the 'Ask the Expert' service can be utilised where senior examiners will be able to advise.
- **Practice makes perfect** - I am very aware that the skills which are being highlighted in this report as those which candidates need to demonstrate and employ, are not always straightforward for candidates. It is incumbent upon teachers to develop these skills in candidates throughout the course as they provide the building blocks for the optional units as well. Centres are strongly advised to run a practice controlled assessment - **but not one based on the current titles** - prior to the real thing and to use this as a formative exercise to highlight to candidates what is required. This practice can be referred back to when the real task is being set. Teachers might ask questions such as:
 - What did you do well in the practice investigation?
 - Which assessment criteria did you score less well on?
 - How might you improve your performance with each assessment criteria?

Additional support

There is extensive support for teachers in relation to CA from Edexcel. This includes: Ask the Expert - a service which allows teachers to ask questions of the senior examining team directly -

<http://edexcel--5571.custhelp.com/app/ask/session/L3NpZC9pOUI5cHJfag%3D%3D>

There are exemplar materials and regular updates on training, including online training on the GCSE Business web site -

<http://www.edexcel.com/quals/gcse/gcse09/Business/Business/Pages/default.aspx>

Customised training can be arranged to deal with specific queries that centres have.

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<http://www.edexcel.com/quals/gcse/gcse09/Business/Business/Pages/training.aspx>

A publication designed to support students in preparing for CA has also been published by Pearson/Edexcel along with other guidance on CA which appears in the official Edexcel textbooks for the qualification -

<http://www.edexcel.com/quals/gcse/gcse09/Business/Business/Pages/Resources.aspx>

Grade Boundaries - June 2010

5BS02	Total	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Raw Mark	40	34	30	26	22	18	14	10	6
UMS	50	45	40	35	30	25	20	15	10

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