

Moderators' Report/
Principal Moderator Feedback

Summer 2013

GCSE Business Studies (5BS02)

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General comments

This was the fourth series of the Unit 2 controlled assessment. The familiarisation that centres are demonstrating with this unit, as noted last year, has continued as centres consolidate their understanding of controlled assessment, how it is assessed and how to enable students to achieve to their best ability. Performance this year – as measured by the mean mark – was broadly in line with last year.

The important statement from last year on the nature of controlled assessment is reproduced below:

If approached in the correct manner, controlled assessment is an opportunity for students 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. There is no opportunity for students to draft and re-draft their work, and to thus impose additional work on teachers. Centres must acknowledge that, given this 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.

A summary of controlled assessment is as follows:

- Students have a choice of 5 investigation titles. New titles are published each year.
- There are 4 assessment objectives – 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**.
- All students should investigate a different business.

This year there were very few examples of students choosing large businesses to investigate, and centres are commended for their apparent – and recommended – assistance that students choose a small business as the focus of their investigation. There still remains, however, a number of centres requiring all students to complete an investigation into the same business. This is not the appropriate approach to controlled assessment and is to be discouraged.

Annotation by centres was fairly good this year and this is another sign of the adjustment to controlled assessment. Centres should understand that the moderator is agreeing (or not) their marking, rather than doing a complete remark of the sample. Good annotation clearly helps this process and enables moderators to see how marks have been arrived at. There is a recommended list of abbreviations that centres can use, but these are not compulsory. Providing the moderator can see how marks have been awarded, this is the most important thing. A series of ticks alongside student work is of little use. More valuable are notations as follows:

- *Source of info 1/2/3...*
- *Using Research to address the Q*
- *Simple Analysis – L2*

As also noted last year, there is no expectation or requirement that students will word-process their work. We understand the pressures that some centres are under in accessing ICT facilities for controlled assessment.

In terms of the choice of tasks this year, by far the most popular was Task 3 – how the business might increase its profit. Task 5, the economic question, was not very popular in this series and appeared to be a topic area – interest rates - that students were not comfortable with, despite being a task that could have been approached with only secondary research.

Below is a summary of the main issues arising for each of the different marking criteria:

Research

Centres and students should expect that different investigations will require different types of research. There is no simple numerical formula to be applied. For Task 3 – how the business might increase its profit – students were often able to gather lots of examples of their Research. These examples often took the form of interviews, customer surveys, etc. For research, quantity **does not** automatically mean a high mark. Some centres are still rewarding the range whether it is appropriate to the task or not. Some centres once used generic questionnaires/ interviews with entrepreneurs.

Task 2, on the other hand, proved to be less popular, but those that did attempt this task typically conducted research into the competition in a local market and went on to create market maps from their research. This was often very effective.

Centres increasingly recognise the type of research data that is appropriate for Unit 2 and its emphasis on small business. Task 4 asked students to consider how the recruitment process of a business might be improved. At face value this looks like a challenging task, requiring deep insight into the working of a business. However, this was not the case. One memorable piece studied a hairdresser advertising for a part-time stylist by placing a postcard in the door window of the salon. A photograph was produced and was analysed. An interview with the owner established that this method, along with word-of-mouth was the main part of the recruitment process. Further research into customer views led the student to offer a number of suggestions as to how this process might be improved. Simple, original and full of insight.

Note that there is no expectation that students will collect both primary and secondary data. The criteria descriptor makes no such requirement. The key term in the descriptor is '*selectivity*'. Has the student selected information which is appropriate to the investigation title? For Level 3 (7-9 marks) work must demonstrate '*good selectivity*'. For Level 4 the research must have, '*high-quality organisation ...and focus*'. These descriptors should encourage students to **avoid** providing unnecessary detail about the chosen business, such as its history or location. This information is not required in any depth. Similarly with photographs and maps, students should by all means use these, but only if they help to address the question.

This year Task 5 – interest rates - was designed such that it did not require any primary research to be carried out. This investigation required solely secondary research, although some students chose to build their investigation around a particular business, which was fine. Note that, whilst we may use this type of secondary-based question in future series, there is no plan to ensure that such a format will be included every year.

Presentation

The quality of Presentation this year was similarly strong to previous series. Students are rewarded for presenting their findings using 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. The point is students must 'do something' with the information and data they collect, and this must be appropriate. For example, a pie chart showing the results of a 'yes or no' question on a survey is not appropriate. Simply including a chart is, in itself, not enough.

Organising work into appendices, and making reference to this section, is also an effective method of presenting information. Using charts, maps and photographs will not automatically push an investigation high into marks for presentation. Such techniques must support/clarify the point being made.

Analysis

Some students perform very well in this area, whilst others struggle. This is the nature of a higher order skill like Analysis. However, even for less able students, the skills can be developed and performance improved. It is essential that students make use of their research information to address the particular investigation question. When students conduct interviews or surveys, they need to be clear on why they have asked a question. How do their questions link with the relevant concepts and theories that are integral to their investigation? The impression is that students 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 meaningful analysis. Some students 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. Others, however, used quotes as analysis (not rewardable) or made simple or basic statements which did not merit the higher level marks sometimes given.

Evaluation

As with previous series this was the weakest strand for many students, although the view of the senior examination team was that performance is improving, with students often weighing one factor against another to arrive at a justified conclusion. It is important that the analysis of research data should inform the conclusion students arrive at. Using the Task 4 example referred to above, the student used analysis of information of a range of sources to suggest that the recruitment process of the business could easily, and cheaply, be improved.

Note 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 students need to be aware of this. Students do not need to do this for every title; it depends on which title is chosen.

What was done well?

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

- **Choice** - the most success once again came from centres where students 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 students, 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, and this is fine.

- **Clear focus on the investigation title** – in previous series we have noted that some students/centres have had a tendency to answer what they feel is the question. For example, we have seen in the past comparisons of businesses not required by the question. This year these traits were less in evidence. It is good advice for teachers to keep their students focussed on the specific question. For every piece of research that they are thinking about collecting, encourage them to ask the questions, ‘Does this help me answer the question? If so, how?’
- **Range of businesses** – as noted last year, it is clear that, once again, thousands of small, independent businesses have been investigated by students. From the student’s perspective, these investigations are much more meaningful and valuable as learning experiences. Centres are to be commended for the opportunities they are providing for students to investigate real businesses.
- **Presentation and organisation of work** – as noted above, there was some excellent presentational techniques used by students. Lots of work was structured clearly in different sections using diagrams, charts, footnotes and appendices.

Areas where centres can improve their practice

Note – some of the information below is reproduced from last year’s report as this is still pertinent for centres.

- **Practice makes perfect** - we are very aware that the skills which are being highlighted in this report as those which students need to demonstrate and employ, are not always straightforward for students. It is incumbent upon teachers to develop these skills in students. 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 students 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?

- **Annotation of students' work** - appropriate annotation is a requirement of the OfQual Code of Practice for CA. As indicated above, the annotation of the work was sometimes limited and did not provide much help to moderators in understanding how the marker had been arrived at the levels and marks. It should be remembered that the marking of work is for the benefit of the teacher 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, 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.
- **Presenting research/use of appendices** – there is no expectation that students should submit their entire research folder. The best practice is where appendices are used which contains the specific information that is referred to in the write-up. **However, please ensure that where marks have been awarded which are based on a particular piece of evidence or research that this is included in the piece which is sent to the moderator.**

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 new 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. –

<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

Grade boundaries for this, and all other papers, can be found on the website on this link:

<http://www.edexcel.com/iwantto/Pages/grade-boundaries.aspx>

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