



Course Report 2014

Subject	Business Management
Level	National 5

The statistics used in this report have been compiled before the completion of any Post Results Services.

This report provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers/lecturers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding. It would be helpful to read this report in conjunction with the published assessment and marking instructions for the examination.

Section 1: Comments on the Assessment

Component 1: Question paper

The question paper covered a good breadth of course content in the change to a fully compulsory paper. Section 1 required the candidates to apply their knowledge of the Course to the stimulus material provided, which was handled well.

The paper was accessible for candidates, but there was some evidence that some candidates were presented at the wrong level. The paper gave appropriate challenge and there was an expected spread of attainment from the range of ability presented.

Very few candidates failed to finish the paper, but there were some omitted and overly brief answers, indicating that some still find it hard to complete the paper in the time allowed.

Component 2: Assignment

Overall performance in the assignment was better than in the question paper, with the vast majority of candidates satisfying the requirements to an expected or above standard.

Most candidates structured their assignment using the section titles in the marking guidelines as headings resulting in strong presentation and clear areas for the background information, research, analysis/interpretation and conclusion. On the whole the majority gave evidence-based responses but still some were offering generic theoretical information which limited the number of marks they could be awarded. An adjustment was made to the Grade Boundaries to reflect the ease with which the majority of candidates accessed most of the marks assigned to collating and reporting.

Section 2: Comments on candidate performance

Component 1: Question paper

Most candidates demonstrated good knowledge of the syllabus and handled the case study well. The newer areas of content in the Course appeared to be well taught and answered to an overall high standard. Certain command words are still presenting difficulty — ‘explain’ and ‘justify’ in particular.

Component 2: Assignment

Markers commented that they felt overall performance in this element was strong. The vast majority of assignments were well-structured and robustly researched, leading to production of many good assignments that adhered closely to the marking guidelines.

A few centres appeared to be unfamiliar with the marking guidelines for the Course assignment, leading to very low marks across their cohort.

In general, candidates performed better in the background and research section than in the analysis and interpretation section.

Section 3: Areas in which candidates performed well

Component 1: Question paper

- ◆ Question 1(c): Candidates demonstrated sound knowledge of customer service and handled the 'justify' command word well.
- ◆ Question 1(d)(ii): Very well answered, showing good knowledge of the Equality Act, with most candidates attracting all available marks.
- ◆ Question 1(e)(ii): Candidates coped well with the interpretation required to identify the stage of the produce life cycle.
- ◆ Question 2(e): A strong knowledge of factors considered when setting a price, and development of these factors was given by the majority of candidates.
- ◆ Question 3(a): The 'discuss' command word was well handled with many candidates getting development marks and showing depth of knowledge of the recycling topic.
- ◆ Question 3(c): Robust knowledge of ensuring quality and the requirement to describe these.
- ◆ Question 5(a): Many candidates attracted development marks for this question showing a good depth of knowledge and understanding of the command word.

Component 2: Assignment

Candidates used the headings given in the marking guidelines as titles for each section, which resulted in the production of well-presented and clear assignments. Presentation was generally good, with effective use of sub-headings, graphics/images and diagrams to support findings. Up to 5 marks could be awarded for collating and reporting. Many candidates were able to access the majority of these marks. Differentiation was achieved in the awarding of these marks dependent on the level and consistency of business terminology used.

Markers commented on the suitability of topics chosen. The background information section was handled very well by almost all candidates. The vast majority detailed information in more than the minimum of two areas, and gave extensive information on the chosen organisation — much more than needed to gain the maximum award.

There was good evidence of survey information and interviews that had been used to support the analysis and interpretation section. Use of these led to clear points of analysis and interpretation to gain marks.

Section 4: Areas which candidates found demanding

Component 1: Question paper

- ◆ Question 2(a): Candidates did not use the case study effectively to identify the objectives of the social enterprise organisation. Those who did extract relevant objectives from the case study often mistakenly compared these to objectives of a private sector organisation, not the public sector as instructed.
- ◆ Question 2(b)(ii): Candidates failed to actually describe the method of promotion being used. Many described the advantages or justification, rather than what they actually were. Also a large number of candidates gave two advertising methods (ie radio and television advert) which would only have been awarded 1 mark maximum as advertising was taken as one method of promotion only.
- ◆ Question 4(c): Many answers described the use of the spreadsheet package and not the benefit of using it, and therefore no marks were awarded.
- ◆ Question 4(c)(ii): Candidates often repeated spreadsheet software from 4(c) or failed to relate the software chosen to its use in the finance department.
- ◆ Question 5(c): Few candidates had the knowledge to gain a second mark for the comparison of piece-rate and time-rate.
- ◆ Question 6(a): Most candidates identified internal factors such as 'HR' or 'finance' without an outline of the points.
- ◆ Question 6(b): The marketing mix and methods of production were often wrongly given as the factors of production.

The 'explain' command word still is not being tackled appropriately. Many candidates' answers lacked the detail required to attract marks.

Component 2: Assignment

In some cases, candidates chose a niche or complex topic area or business where information was not easily available, or at all accessible, and therefore restricted the potential of their assignment, attracting few marks.

In the sources of information section, there were a large number of candidates who only gave the purpose of their source and no further evaluation of its suitability. When evaluating the sources many candidates gave a list of generic, theoretical points (ie relevant, cost effective, concise etc) and did not provide much evaluation or explanation of the source used.

When making analytical and interpretive comments, candidates were not always basing these on the evidence they had gathered and documented. If a comment had no evidence, no mark could be awarded for it. Several submissions included large appendices which were either irrelevant or not used to make comments on.

Conclusions were often without justification or linked to the evidence or comments. Also, many candidates merely repeated their analysis as their conclusions rather than trying to summarise or focus on the main factor(s).

Section 5: Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

Component 1: Question paper

For section 1, more practice in the use of the stimulus material so that candidates are prepared for using this material rather than giving general theoretical points. When instructed to use the material, candidates will need to be able to interpret the information for use in their answers.

In section 2, it was evident that the removal of choice questions highlights areas where candidates have weaknesses with specific subject areas. Ensure that candidates are aware that any topic area can be assessed, and that knowledge across the whole syllabus is required.

Centres should ensure that they keep abreast with any updates and changes made over the year to ensure that they are aware of the current requirements. Updates can be found at www.sqa.org.uk/cfe, select Business Management from the drop down menu.

With electronic marking, it would be good practice for typed scripts to be presented in size 12 font and double-line spacing with wide margins.

Component 2: Assignment

Centres and candidates are encouraged to follow the guidelines on the SQA's website closely when preparing their assignment, and to use the *Instructions to Candidates* as issued by SQA. In addition, candidates are strongly advised to structure their assignment according to the section headings used in the marking guidelines.

It is important to stress that the assignment contents must relate to the topic area chosen. No marks may be awarded for analysis and interpretation that presents no clear link to the topic area.

Adequate evidence is vital to the validity of the assignment. This may include an interview, websites, observation, newspapers and so on. If a questionnaire has been used, some sort of analysis of results, including numbers surveyed, is highly encouraged. A minimum of two sources must be used to attract all available research marks.

To ensure the conciseness of the report, the use of appendices for evidence is encouraged. This can be summarised, but candidates should note that only evidence which has actually been referred to should be included. Also ensure that candidates are using suitable business terminology when constructing their reports.

An SQA template is provided for the assignment, and it is strongly recommended that this is used together with the advice regarding the number of pages and appendices. Again it would also be good practice to use a font size of no smaller than 12 points with 1.5 or double line spacing to enhance clarity and legibility.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2013	0
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Number of resulted entries in 2014	5845
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Statistical information: Performance of candidates

Distribution of Course awards including grade boundaries

Distribution of Course awards	%	Cum. %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum Mark 100				
A	34.8%	34.8%	2032	72
B	26.7%	61.4%	1559	62
C	20.4%	81.8%	1190	52
D	6.9%	88.7%	405	47
No award	11.3%	-	659	-