Course report 2019

Subject	Business Management
Level	Advanced Higher

This report provides information on candidates' performance. Teachers, lecturers and assessors may find it useful when preparing candidates for future assessment. The report 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 documents and marking instructions.

The statistics used in this report have been compiled before the completion of any post-results services.

Section 1: comments on the assessment

Question paper

Section 1 proved to be accessible for candidates and they were able to extract relevant information from the case study to answer each question.

Section 2 proved to be more demanding and discriminatory, allowing stronger candidates access to the more difficult marks.

Overall, the question paper was judged to be more demanding than intended. The grade boundaries were adjusted to take account of this.

Project

Many candidates demonstrated higher-order cognitive skills, such as analysis and evaluation, and displayed their knowledge and understanding of the course content in the project. However, this year's candidates did not perform as well as last year's candidates, with the average mark decreasing by 1 mark. This may be due to poor topic choices. Some candidates chose topics that were better aligned with Higher Business Management.

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Areas that candidates performed well in

Question paper

Section 1: case study

Candidates found the case study accessible and showed that they understood the business model. Candidates were able to extract relevant information from it to answer each question.

Questions 2, 3 and 5 were well attempted and most candidates scored highly.

Section 2: essay questions

Question 7(b) was very well attempted, with many candidates achieving full marks. Most candidates were able to describe the different types of discrimination and many candidates also gave examples and were credited for these.

Question 8(a) was well attempted, with many candidates achieving full marks.

Project

Introduction

Candidates completed this section well, stating their aim and then describing why the topic, organisation or industry chosen was appropriate to investigate.

Many candidates gave a brief introduction to the organisation or industry, or background of the activities of the organisation being investigated.

Analysis and evaluation

Candidates who answered the aim of their project scored well.

Candidates who provided evidence for their findings and referenced their evidence were able to gain the majority of available marks.

Candidates who made analytical and evaluative comments on their findings and did not just describe their findings scored highly.

More candidates understood the difference between ethics and corporate social responsibility (CSR) this session. Several candidates chose to investigate both the organisation's ethics and CSR, or investigate only its ethics or CSR to score highly.

Conclusions and recommendations

Many candidates made appropriate and relevant recommendations.

Research

Many candidates showed throughout the project that they had undertaken significant research, which allowed them to make many analysis points. Good quality research came from information from websites, news reports and companies' annual reports. The majority of candidates who displayed research had used more than three significant research

sources that were up-to-date and relevant to gain high marks for this section.

Structure and referencing

This was, on the whole, well done, with the majority of candidates achieving high marks. Many candidates included a well-structured bibliography that showed the date accessed and the date the source was written. This can help to gain marks in the research section.

Areas that candidates found demanding

Question paper

Section 1: case study

Question 1: McDonald's business model — some candidates described the advantages and disadvantages of franchising with no link to how these would help McDonald's grow.

Question 6: concerns shown in the financial analysis — many candidates struggled to gain more than half marks in this question, failing to explain the concerns to McDonald's and instead focusing on the changes in McDonald's performance.

Section 2: essay questions

Question 7(a): many candidates were able to gain general marks for describing features of the Equality Act, but struggled to discuss the impact on the recruitment and selection process.

Question 8(b): candidates who knew what Kurt Lewin's stages of change model was, gained general marks when describing it. However, many candidates found it difficult to explain how the model could assist the effective management of change in organisations.

Question 9: many candidates did not attempt this question and many who did attempt the question failed to correctly name the legislation they mentioned. Many candidates mentioned only one type of taxation, or taxation in general, and so missed out on marks because of this.

Question 10(b): many candidates did not attempt this question. The majority of the candidates who did attempt the question gained 2 or 3 marks out of the 4 marks available.

Project

Introduction

Some candidates chose topics that were more suited to the Higher Business Management assignment. These topics did not score well as they do not provide enough scope for analysis to gain high marks.

Several candidates did not answer the aim of their project and so did not score as well as they could have.

It is important that candidates have one aim and stick to it throughout the project.

Analysis and evaluation

Many candidates were able to access the analysis marks. However, the evaluation marks proved more difficult to award as candidates found it difficult to give some level of the scale of the impact of their finding. Candidates should be aware that findings are important to set up the analysis points, but no marks are allocated for findings on their own. All findings must be analysed or evaluated.

Some candidates who investigated the impact of technology in technological firms ended up investigating the product portfolio instead of the ways technology affects the organisation. For example, examining the products Amazon sells is not investigating the ways Amazon's technology affects the organisation. If candidates are going to use the impact of technology in their project, they should consider using a non-technological organisation to avoid the pitfalls of examining the advantages and disadvantages of the organisation's products.

Several candidates, when investigating CSR, went down the route of examining how the organisation promotes its CSR, which is marketing (and not included in the course assessment specification). Often, if a survey was used, it simply asked if the customers were aware of the organisation's CSR, which did not answer the aim of the project.

Some candidates chose titles that included how the topic would help the organisation's image or improve its competitiveness. These candidates often found themselves simply repeating their analysis points in the conclusions and recommendations section, gaining few marks.

Some candidates used findings that were historical and out of date, so were not credited.

Conclusions and recommendations

Conclusions should not be a repeat of the analysis points. Candidates should try to pull two analysis points together to make a conclusion.

Research

Many candidates used surveys with questions that were not pertinent to their project aims. This reduced their marks.

Some candidates used sources that were out of date and, therefore, not relevant. Candidates should be encouraged to keep their research current.

Structure and referencing

It was clear some candidates submitted an adapted Higher assignment. These projects did not meet the requirements of the Advanced Higher project, and were marked accordingly.

Section 3: preparing candidates for future assessment

Question paper

Section 1: case study

Candidates should be encouraged not to copy huge sections of the case study, as this takes up a lot of time. Instead candidates should briefly identify the initiative or information from the case study and then make their point.

Section 2: essay questions

Candidates should be encouraged to use real-life examples in the essay questions. These examples should demonstrate the point they are making. Marks can be gained for examples.

Candidates need to be aware that they can gain general marks for displaying knowledge of the course content, for example in questions 7(a) and 8(b).

Project

Introduction

Candidates must choose a topic from the course content to gain marks.

The title or aim of the project should be clearly stated and, if listed in more than one place, it should be the same in each place.

Candidates should be encouraged to choose their own topic and organisation and not a whole-class topic or organisation. Whole classes should not use the same topic or organisation for their projects.

Candidates are not required to describe why their sources of information are appropriate anywhere in the project.

Analysis and evaluation

When evaluating, candidates should be encouraged to give some level of scale (not just 'huge impact'). For example, if a candidate comments on how much an organisation has donated to charity, they could compare this to the amount of profit the organisation makes each year to evaluate the significance of the donation.

All findings must be referenced. No marks are awarded for points made with no referencing or research. Candidates should be encouraged to ensure the reference sets up the point, for example by including a footnote near the start of the point or immediately after the point. Candidates must answer their aim in this section and all analysis and evaluation must relate to their aim.

Conclusions and recommendations

Candidates should try to pull two analysis points together to make a conclusion.

Research

Candidates should be reminded that research marks are awarded based on evidence throughout the project. For example how many sources they have used or if the information in the URL and/or in the bibliography is relevant.

Candidates should be encouraged to show the date the article was written in the bibliography as well as the date they accessed the article.

Candidates should be encouraged not to use surveys or questionnaires.

Candidates do not need to split the project into field and desk research sections. It should be a holistic report.

There is no requirement for a section on the validity of the sources used.

Structure and referencing

Candidates should adhere to the presentation guidelines stated in the *Advanced Higher Business Management Project Assessment Task* on SQA's website.

Candidates should be reminded that the Advanced Higher project has a different structure to the Higher assignment.

Grade boundary and statistical information:

Statistical information: update on courses

Number of resulted entries in 2018	474

Number of resulted entries in 2019	453

Statistical information: performance of candidates

Distribution of course awards including grade boundaries

Distribution of course awards	Percentage	Cumulative %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum mark				
A	25.4%	25.4%	115	82
B	25.2%	50.6%	114	69
C	25.8%	76.4%	117	56
D	9.1%	85.4%	41	49
No award	14.6%	-	66	-

General commentary on grade boundaries

SQA's main aim is to be fair to candidates across all subjects and all levels and maintain comparable standards across the years, even as arrangements evolve and change.

SQA aims to set examinations and create marking instructions that allow:

♦ a competent candidate to score a minimum of 50% of the available marks (the notional C boundary)
♦ a well-prepared, very competent candidate to score at least 70% of the available marks (the notional A boundary)

It is very challenging to get the standard on target every year, in every subject at every level.

Therefore, SQA holds a grade boundary meeting every year for each subject at each level to bring together all the information available (statistical and judgemental). The principal assessor and SQA qualifications manager meet with the relevant SQA head of service and statistician to discuss the evidence and make decisions. Members of the SQA management team chair these meetings. SQA can adjust the grade boundaries as a result of the meetings. This allows the pass rate to be unaffected in circumstances where there is evidence that the question paper has been more, or less, challenging than usual.

♦ The grade boundaries can be adjusted downwards if there is evidence that the question paper is more challenging than usual.
♦ The grade boundaries can be adjusted upwards if there is evidence that the exam is less challenging than usual.
♦ Where standards are comparable to previous years, similar grade boundaries are maintained.

Grade boundaries from question papers in the same subject at the same level tend to be marginally different year to year. This is because the particular questions, and the mix of questions, are different. This is also the case for question papers set by centres. If SQA alters a boundary, this does not mean that centres should necessarily alter their boundary in the question papers that they set themselves.