Course report 2019

Subject	Business Management
Level	National 5

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

The question paper covered a good breadth of course content and was accessible for candidates. It mainly performed as expected, however, the grade boundaries were adjusted to take account of the slightly higher level of demand in a few questions.

Assignment

The assignment performed as expected, with almost all candidates submitting reports within the word count. Reports were well presented, using a wide variety of topic areas and a range of businesses from different sectors of the economy.

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Areas that candidates performed well in

Question paper

Section 1

Question 1(a)(i): candidates performed well in this question, with most successfully identifying stakeholders from the stimulus material.

Question 1(c)(i): most candidates showed sound knowledge of internal factors.

Question 2(a): candidates were able to interpret target markets from the stimulus material.

Question 2(f): candidates showed good knowledge of the importance of quality.

Section 2

Question 3(b): most candidates were able to define non-durable goods.

Question 4(b): candidates responded well to justifying reasons for training.

Question 5(a)(ii): most candidates were able to identify the correct stage of the product life cycle.

Question 7(b): candidates demonstrated a sound knowledge of the consequences of overstocking.

Assignment

Candidates who used appropriate headings and layout performed well. Most assignments were within the word count and included appropriate graphics and appendices. Candidates used a wide variety of business organisations. Many reports focused on marketing mix and customer service. Candidates performed well in:

♦ background information
♦ research methods and sources
♦ collating and reporting

Candidates' analysis of findings is improving.

Areas that candidates found demanding

Question paper

Section 1

Question 1(a)(ii): generally, candidates performed well in this question. However, many only gave one interest of each of their stakeholders from question 1(a)(i) and did not add development or a second interest to gain the 3 marks available.

Question 1(b): some candidates did not recognise that the method used to distribute the chocolates was road. Some candidates confused methods of distribution with channels of distribution. Application of the command word 'compare' was poor.

Question 1(d)(ii): candidates found it difficult to identify methods of external recruitment. Many candidates identified stages of recruitment instead.

Question 1(e): many candidates did not use the case study effectively to answer this question. Many gave generic explanations of factors affecting choice of supplier, which were not credited. The factors had to be identifiable from exhibit 1.

Question 2(b): many candidates misread this question and compared third sector to private or public, rather than comparing private to public.

Question 2(c): some candidates could not explain factors that affect location.

Section 2

Question 4(c): candidates showed poor knowledge of working practices. Candidates may have misread the question and identified methods of motivation instead.

Question 5(a)(i): candidates showed knowledge of the product life cycle, but many did not label the axis.

Question 6(a): some candidates could not identify the labels in the income statement, showing poor knowledge of key terms. Some candidates are using old accounting terminology, for example 'net profit'.

Question 6(b): some candidates found it difficult to explain the purpose of a cash budget. The question did prove to be discriminatory.

Question 6(c): candidate descriptions were poor. Many candidates gave very general responses or gave uses of spreadsheets in finance rather than advantages of using the software.

Assignment

Background information

Some reports had background information sections that were overly long and used up unnecessary words from the candidate's overall word count. Most reports had a suitable

purpose, but a few had overly complex and/or dual-purpose topics, which made it more difficult for the candidates to analyse their findings and come to suitable conclusions.

Research methods and sources

Some candidates continued to list generic, theoretical points, which did not clarify how the research method was beneficial to their assignment.

Findings, analysis and interpretation

Some candidates did not give analysis of their findings, which meant the maximum mark allocation available was 6 marks. Only a few candidates gave findings that were not relevant to their topic, so could not be credited.

Conclusions and recommendations

Some candidates gave new information in this section that could not be credited. Some candidates could not justify reasons for their conclusions and/or recommendations. Conclusions and/or recommendations without a justification gain a maximum of 1 mark across this section of the report.

Collating and reporting

Some candidates used the title 'introduction' rather than 'background information' so could not be credited with the heading mark. A few candidates did not include any graphics or only gave one graphic.

Section 3: preparing candidates for future assessment

Question paper

Candidates should read questions carefully, taking account of the command words. They must ensure that command words are applied accurately. For example, with 'compare' many candidates give an answer such as 'field research is up to date whereas desk research is not'. This cannot be credited as it does not state what desk research is. A suitable response would be '*field research is up to date whereas desk research is out of date as it could have been written a long time ago'.* In this example, one side of the 'compare' is qualified.

Candidates should take account of the mark allocation of each question. This helps them give the relevant number of points and/or developments to reach the mark allocation.

Section 1 asks candidates to use the case study and any additional exhibits provided, for example infographics. This style of questioning should be practised in class to help avoid candidates answering generally. (For example in question 1(e).)

Centres should be using new financial terminology linked to income statements.

Assignment

Centres should continue to follow SQA guidelines when preparing for the assignment.

Centres must use the template provided by SQA. Centres can use this to pre-set fonts, sizes and line spacing, but the template should not include the headings. Candidates gain 1 mark for appropriate use of headings; therefore, it must be the candidates' own work. Centres with bi-level classes should note that the headings differ slightly between National 5 and Higher.

When choosing a topic, candidates should avoid using double or overly complex topics. This can make it challenging for candidates to collect information and, more importantly, difficult for them to interpret.

Candidates should avoid using the generic term 'money' especially if using it in place of sales and/or profit. It is important that conclusions and recommendations are justified. Candidates should state their conclusion and/or recommendation and then say why they are stating it. They must be able to link it back to the research they used in the analysis and interpretation section. If their justification is new information, then they will not gain marks.

Candidates should not exceed the 1,300 word limit and they must declare the word count accurately on the flyleaf. Appendices do not contribute towards the word count; however, there should be no more than two pages of appendices.

Grade boundary and statistical information:

Statistical information: update on courses

Number of resulted entries in 2018	7411

Number of resulted entries in 2019	7576

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	35.1%	35.1%	2660	80
B	22.6%	57.7%	1713	68
C	20.7%	78.4%	1568	56
D	13.3%	91.7%	1005	44
No award	8.3%	-	630	-

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.