



Course Report 2018

Subject	Business Management
Level	Advanced Higher

This report provides information on the performance of candidates. 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

Summary of the course assessment

Overall, the question paper was judged to be slightly more demanding than intended at the top end. The grade boundary for an 'A' was reduced by one mark to take account of this.

Component 1: question paper

The question paper is divided into two sections: Section 1 — a set of questions based on a case study; and Section 2 — essay questions. Candidates can be examined in any area of the course content. All questions are mandatory.

In the case study, all questions/answers draw on its content. The case study proved to be accessible for candidates and they were able to extract relevant information from it to answer each question.

Section 2 includes essay questions which are topic-specific, inviting responses of increased depth. This section also includes questions of a narrower nature. These questions are more demanding and discriminatory, allowing stronger candidates access to the more difficult marks. The majority of candidates attempted all questions.

Component 2: project

The project has a greater emphasis on the application of skills. Candidates have a free choice of topic (which allows for personalisation and choice), but it must be drawn from published course content, and linked to organisations which candidates must research.

Candidates were able to display their knowledge and understanding of the course content in the context of a business topic and the chosen organisations.

This component allowed candidates to apply higher-order cognitive skills such as analysis and evaluation, on the whole, many candidates did this well. Candidates performed slightly better than last year and this is to be expected as centres become more familiar with the project and the course.

Centres are to be commended for their hard work in preparing candidates.

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Areas in which candidates performed well

Component 1: 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 1, 2 and 3: These were well attempted and most candidates scored highly.

Section 2: essay questions

Question 7(a): Many candidates scored highly as they were able to describe the contingency theory of management well.

Question 8(a): This was well attempted, with many candidates achieving high marks. However, some candidates scored only general marks as they did not include any specific information about the Association of South East Asian Nations or China.

Question 10(a): This question was very well attempted, with many candidates achieving full marks. Most candidates were able to describe a Gantt chart and many candidates were able to evaluate its use in improving a manager's time and task management.

Component 2: project

Introduction

A brief introduction to the organisation/industry or background of the activities of the organisation being investigated was useful in this section and is good practice.

Candidates completed this section well by describing why the topic chosen was appropriate to investigate.

Analysis and evaluation

Candidates who referenced and evidenced their findings, and made analytical and evaluative comments on their findings were able to gain many marks.

Candidates who answered the aim of their project scored well.

Research

Many candidates 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 which showed not only the date accessed but the date the source was written — this can help to gain marks in the 'Research' section.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Component 1: question paper

Section 1: case study

Question 4: Women's Empowerment goal — some candidates focused on the impact only on Vodafone, this limited the marks they were able to gain. The question was open so candidates who explained the impact of these initiatives on other stakeholders were able to gain maximum marks.

Question 6: Many candidates struggled to gain more than half marks in this question, failing to use the specific information in the exhibit to answer the question.

Section 2: essay questions

Question 7(b): Many candidates were unable to link the contingency theory of management to UK organisations today.

Question 9: Many candidates demonstrated that they do not understand what e-commerce is and so only discussed the impact of general technology thus missing out on marks. Some candidates made no reference to the functional areas which meant they could only access general marks.

Component 2: project

Introduction

Product portfolio and PESTEC are not part of the course content. The aim of the project should relate to a topic in the course assessment specification. If candidates are investigating the impact of external factors on an organisation it must be in relation to globalisation and therefore the impact these have on the organisation growing globally. Candidates who simply looked at the impact of external factors on the organisation itself did not score well.

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

Several candidates had aims which differed between their title and their introduction. Candidates should have one aim and stick to this. Several candidates stated that the topic they were investigating had been studied as part of the Advanced Higher course but this is not enough to gain the relevant reason mark.

Analysis and evaluation

There were fewer candidates this year who did not analyse or evaluate their points in this section, and who instead only described what the organisation was doing. There are no marks for findings — all findings must be analysed or evaluated.

Candidates must be careful to understand the topic they are choosing, for example some candidates who investigated 'Technology' looked at the organisation's products and thus ended up investigating the product portfolio not the ways technology impacted the organisation. For example investigating Apple's products is not investigating how Apple's technology impacts the organisation.

A few candidates had two separate topics in their project, eg CSR and Technology. In these cases, candidates will only achieve marks for one topic, not both.

Some candidates struggled to understand the difference between Ethics and Corporate Social Responsibility. Candidates must ensure they are answering their aim as investigating a lack of Ethics is different to investigating how well an organisation undertakes its Corporate Social Responsibility.

Evaluation marks proved more difficult to award as candidates found it difficult to give some level of scale.

Some candidates had very narrow aims which reduced their ability to gain many analysis marks eg to investigate the impact of a topic on profitability.

Some candidates used findings which 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

Several candidates used surveys which were not pertinent to their projects. In some cases candidate questionnaires are hindering marks.

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

Structure and referencing

It was clear when candidates had simply adapted their Higher assignment. This put these candidates at a disadvantage as their projects did not meet the requirements of the Advanced Higher project as per guidelines and Understanding Standards materials.

Section 3: advice for the preparation of future candidates

Component 1: question paper

European Union

With regards to the delivery and assessment of the European Union topic in the 'Global Issues' section, candidates should continue to study the EU and its effect on UK organisations and EU policies. In relation to the question paper, candidates will not be assessed on the European Monetary Union and EU enlargement. Future updates regarding the course content and/or assessment requirements will be given as required.

Section 1: case study

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

Section 2: essay questions

Candidates can gain development marks for using real-life examples of points they are making in the essay questions, and should be encouraged to do so. Candidates need to be aware that they will gain general marks for displaying knowledge of the course content, for example in questions 8(a), 8(b), 10(a) and 10(b).

Component 2: project

Introduction

Candidates must ensure they choose a topic from the course content.

The title or aim of the project should be clearly stated and if listed in more than one place, for example title page, introduction and/or header, should be consistent in each place.

Candidates should be encouraged to choose their own topic and organisation and not a whole class topic or organisation. Whole centres should not be undertaking the same topic or organisation.

Candidates are not required to describe why their sources of information are appropriate.

Analysis and evaluation

When evaluating, candidates should be encouraged to give some level of scale, not just 'huge impact' etc.

All findings must be referenced. No marks will be awarded for points made with no referencing or research. Candidates should be encouraged to ensure the reference sets up the point, for example 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.

Research

Candidates should be reminded that research marks are awarded from evidence throughout the project, for example how many sources can be seen to have been used; are they relevant?

Candidates should be encouraged to show the currency of websites they have used in order to gain the research marks, and to show the date the article was written in the bibliography as well as the date accessed.

Structure and referencing

Candidates should adhere to presentation guidelines stated in the General assessment information for Advanced Higher Business Management on SQA's website.

Candidates should ensure consistent font in a minimum size of 11 point and one and a half line spacing.

It should be remembered 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 2017	450
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Number of resulted entries in 2018	474
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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	26.4%	26.4%	125	83
B	28.7%	55.1%	136	71
C	23.6%	78.7%	112	60
D	9.7%	88.4%	46	54
No award	11.6%	-	55	-

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 which allow a competent candidate to score a minimum of 50% of the available marks (the notional C boundary) and 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 Business Manager and Statistician to discuss the evidence and make decisions. The meetings are chaired by members of the management team at SQA.

- ◆ The grade boundaries can be adjusted downwards if there is evidence that the exam is more challenging than usual, allowing the pass rate to be unaffected by this circumstance.
- ◆ The grade boundaries can be adjusted upwards if there is evidence that the exam is less challenging than usual, allowing the pass rate to be unaffected by this circumstance.
- ◆ Where standards are comparable to previous years, similar grade boundaries are maintained.

Grade boundaries from exam 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 exams set by centres. If SQA alters a boundary, this does not mean that centres should necessarily alter their boundary in the corresponding practice exam paper.