



Course Report 2017

Subject	Business Management
Level	Advanced Higher

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 and assessors in their preparation of candidates for future assessment. 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 documents and marking instructions.

Section 1: Comments on the assessment

Summary of the course assessment

Component 1: Question paper

The question paper is worth 80 marks and 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. It is designed to be accessible for all candidates. The case study proved to be very accessible for candidates and they were able to extract relevant information from it to answer each question. Candidates did not need to access the general marks available.

The essay questions are more topic-specific, inviting responses of increased depth. Some of the essay questions are relatively wide to allow less able candidates to display knowledge. The majority of candidates attempted all questions.

Section 2 also includes questions of a narrower nature. These questions are more demanding and discriminatory, allowing stronger candidates access to the more difficult marks.

Overall the question paper was judged to be slightly less demanding than intended. This could possibly be attributed to the fact that the case study was about a well-known supermarket that candidates were familiar with.

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 the candidate 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 and, on the whole, many candidates did this well.

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. As a result, general marks did not need to be awarded for this section.

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

Question 4: This was generally well attempted with many candidates achieving high marks

Section 2: Essay questions

Question 7: Candidates who knew about Mintzberg's roles scored well. However, some candidates mixed up Mintzberg's roles with Fayol's roles.

Question 8 (b): This was very well attempted, with many candidates achieving full marks.

Question 10: This was also well attempted, with some candidates achieving full marks.

Component 2: Project

Introduction

Candidates completed this section well.

Analysis and evaluation

Candidates who referenced and evidenced their findings, and who explained the impact of the aim of their project, were able to gain many marks.

Research

Many candidates used at least three significant research sources that were up-to-date and relevant to gain high marks for this section.

Structure and referencing

This was well done, with the majority of candidates achieving high marks. Many candidates included a well-structured bibliography.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Component 1: Question paper

Section 1: Case study

There were few problems with the questions in this section. Candidates engaged with the organisation in the case study and made effective use of the material to produce well constructed answers.

Section 2 : Essays

Question 9 (a): Some candidates showed that they did not understand what corporate social responsibility is — that it is not just complying with legislation.

Question 9 (b): Not all candidates were able to identify initiatives to explore and so many explored environmental responsibility in general, which meant they missed out on marks.

Component 2: Project

Introduction

Some candidates still chose a Higher topic, or one that is not part of the course content, eg motivation, PESTEC/external factors and leadership style theory. Candidates must ensure that the topic they choose is in the course assessment specification. In future, no marks will be awarded in such cases.

Analysis and evaluation

Some candidates did not analyse or evaluate their points in this section, instead only describing what the organisation was doing.

A few candidates had two separate topics in their project, eg CSR and the affects of an organisation on its host country. In these cases, candidates will only achieve marks for one topic, not several topics.

Candidates should be aware that the project is not just a general essay on a topic on the course. For example, a title such as 'Evaluating the impact of Brexit on the UK' is not an appropriate title as it does not look at the impact on a particular industry or an organisation.

Some candidates struggled to gain evaluation marks as they found it difficult to give some level of scale.

Conclusions and recommendations

Some candidates struggled to gain conclusion marks, and repeated what they had said in the Analysis and evaluation section. This meant they could not gain marks.

Structure and referencing

Several candidates referred to research they had undertaken, but showed no evidence of it.

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 in the Global Issues unit, 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

Centres should continue to encourage candidates to source all their answers to the questions from the given case study and not to use general marks.

Section 2: Essays

Candidates need to be aware that they 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. In some questions it is difficult to gain marks without using real life examples, eg initiatives in question 9(b).

Component 2: Project

Introduction

Candidates must ensure they choose a topic from the course content to gain marks in future. The title or aim of the project should be succinct, and candidates should be encouraged to fulfil the aim of the project, eg if the candidate is aiming to examine the impact of something, then they must ensure they describe the impact on the organisation and not just what the organisation is doing.

Candidates should be encouraged to choose a topic that they can find facts, figures and information on, eg if looking at how something affects an organisation's profits then the candidate should be able to provide profit figures or trends. Likewise, if candidates are exploring how something gives an organisation a competitive edge, then their analysis must be linked to competition.

Candidates should be encouraged to choose their own topic and organisation and not a whole class topic or organisation.

Analysis and evaluation

When evaluating, candidates should be encouraged to give some level of scale, not just 'huge impact' etc. An analysis point should provide a consequence or a positive or negative impact, whereas the evaluation should describe the degree of the impact.

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, eg a footnote near the start of the point or immediately after the point.

Research

Candidates should be reminded that research marks are awarded from evidence throughout the project, eg how many sources can be seen to have been used; are they relevant etc. Candidates should be encouraged to show the currency of websites they have used, and to show the date the article was written in the bibliography.

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

Grade Boundary and Statistical information:

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2016	363
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Number of resulted entries in 2017	450
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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 -				
A	29.6%	29.6%	133	87
B	27.8%	57.3%	125	75
C	23.1%	80.4%	104	63
D	8.4%	88.9%	38	57
No award	11.1%	-	50	-

General commentary on grade boundaries

- ◆ While SQA aims to set examinations and create marking instructions which will 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.
- ◆ Each year, SQA therefore holds a grade boundary meeting for each subject at each level where it brings 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.
- ◆ An exam paper at a particular level in a subject in one year tends to have a marginally different set of grade boundaries from exam papers in that subject at that level in other years. This is because the particular questions, and the mix of questions, are different. This is also the case for exams set in centres. If SQA has already altered a boundary in a particular year in, say, Higher Chemistry, this does not mean that centres should necessarily alter boundaries in their prelim exam in Higher Chemistry. The two are not that closely related, as they do not contain identical questions.
- ◆ 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.