Course Report 2017

Subject	Business Management
Level	National 5

Section 1: Comments on the assessment

Summary of the course assessment

Component 1: Question paper

The question paper mainly performed as expected and was accessible for candidates. The grade boundary was adjusted to take account of the slightly higher level of demand in one question.

Almost all candidates completed the paper in the time allocated.

Component 2: Assignment

The assignment performed as expected. A much wider range of topics were chosen by candidates this session, including: customer service; competition; the marketing mix; external factors; and quality methods. There was also a greater variety of business organisations chosen.

Section 2: Comments on candidate performance

Areas in which candidates performed well

Component 1: Question paper

Overall, the quality of candidate responses this year was good, with many showing sound knowledge when asked to identify or interpret from the case studies (Questions 1(a), 1b(i) and 2(a)). Candidates coped well in the application of the 'compare' command word.

Question 1 (b) (ii): Candidates demonstrated sound knowledge of methods of distribution and handled the 'discuss' command word well.

Question 2 (b) (ii): A strong knowledge of costs and benefits of methods of production.

Question 3 (a) (i): Many candidates were awarded all available marks for sectors of economy.

Question 3 (b): Candidates demonstrated sound knowledge of methods used to ensure good customer service.

Question 4 (d): This was very well answered, showing good knowledge of the Equality Act, with most candidates awarded all available marks.

Question 5 (b): Candidates demonstrated robust knowledge of ensuring quality and the requirement to describe these.

Component 2: Assignment

In general, candidates performed well in this component. Most candidates gained good marks for the background introduction, research sources and collating and reporting.

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.

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

Areas which candidates found demanding

Component 1: Question paper
Overall, significant numbers of candidates did not access the full range of marks available for 'describe' questions.

Section 1
Question 1 (c): Many candidates described external factors but did not detail the effect of the factors.

Question 1 (d): Some candidates compared objectives rather than features.

Question 2 (b) (i): Candidates did not describe the method of production being used. Many only identified the method.

Question 2 (d): Although candidates showed knowledge of stakeholder, some were unable to explain their influence. Many candidates described the interest of stakeholders.

Section 2
Question 3 (a) (ii): Few candidates had the knowledge to gain a second mark. Some candidates compared features, eg ownership rather than objectives.

Question 4 (a): Many candidates did not describe documents and merely identified them. Several candidates described technology to be used to create documents.

Question 4 (b): Few candidates had the knowledge to gain a second comparison mark.

Question 5 (a): The use of technology in operations was very poorly done, and in many cases omitted. Many candidates gave very general answers and some candidates gave marketing or human resources uses as opposed to operations. As stated in the Course Assessment Specification, candidates should be able to describe the use of technology in all four functional areas.

Question 5 (b) (ii): Candidates showed poor knowledge of terms associated with inventory. These are part of the National 5 course that fall under suppliers and over/under stocking.

Question 6 b (ii): Candidates had some difficulty in justifying sources of finance. Many merely repeated their answer to part (i). Few candidates had the knowledge to gain the third mark.

Component 2: Assignment
In the analysis section candidates did not always base their comments on the evidence they had gathered and documented. If a comment had no evidence, no mark could be awarded for it. Many candidates detailed findings from textbooks which were generic theory points and not directly part of the research on their business, and this only attracted a maximum of 1 mark across the whole section.

Sometimes candidates moved away from their chosen topic.

Conclusions were often given without justification or were not 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). Few candidates gave enough development to attract full marks.

Some candidates were unable to gain the mark for graphics as they had not included any or had only one.

Some reports were still overly long and exceeded the four-page maximum.

Section 3: Advice for the preparation of future candidates

Component 1: Question paper

Centres should ensure that they keep abreast of the changes to external assessment for session 2017–18. It is important that teachers download and read the new Course Specification from SQA website (http://www.sqa.org.uk/files_ccc/BusinessManagementCourseSpecN5.pdf).

Centres are also encouraged to use the CPD audio presentation and support available from SQA website.

From session 2017–18 candidates could be asked a 5-mark question on any of the five mandatory areas of study. It is imperative that centres work with candidates on the development of their answers to ensure they are prepared to give the depth of answer required to attract high marks.

Candidates need to be aware that technology can be tested across all functional areas.

Candidates must read questions carefully, taking account of the command words and number of marks allocated to each question.

Practice in using the new specimen question paper is highly recommended.

Component 2: Assignment

It was clear that, overall, candidate performance in the assignment was still high this year. This reflects good support and preparation from teachers/lecturers in facilitating opportunities for candidates to choose appropriate topics/business organisations and carry out their research.

Centres and candidates are encouraged to follow the updated guidelines on the SQA's website closely when preparing their assignment, and to use the Instructions to Candidates issued by SQA.

Candidates should only use the four main headings provided in the marking guidelines to structure their assignment. In addition, it is important to stress that no marks will be awarded for analysis and interpretation that presents no clear link to the topic area chosen.

When using charts and graphs it would be more beneficial if these included appropriate labels.

Candidates should not exceed 1,300 words for their assignment, with a maximum of two pages for appendices. The assignment should use a font size no smaller than 12 point, with 1.5 or double line spacing to enhance the clarity and legibility.

Grade Boundary and Statistical information:

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2016	7986

Number of resulted entries in 2017	8015

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	33.4%	33.4%	2674	69
B	23.3%	56.7%	1868	59
C	21.2%	77.8%	1697	49
D	7.8%	85.6%	622	44
No award	14.4%	-	1154	-

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.