



National
Qualifications

Business Management Assignment General assessment information

This pack contains general assessment information for centres preparing candidates for the assignment Component of Higher Business Management Course assessment.

It must be read in conjunction with the specific assessment task for this Component of Course assessment, which may only be downloaded from SQA's designated secure website by authorised personnel.

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Introduction

This is the general assessment information for Higher Business Management assignment.

This assignment is worth 30 marks. The marks contribute 30% of the overall marks for the Course assessment. The Course will be graded A-D.

Marks for all Course Components are added up to give a total Course assessment mark which is then used as the basis for grading decisions.

This is one of two Components of Course assessment. The other Component is a question paper.

This document describes the general requirements for the assessment of the assignment Component for this Course. It gives general information and instructions for assessors.

It must be read in conjunction with the assessment task for this Component of Course assessment.

Equality and inclusion

This Course assessment has been designed to ensure that there are no unnecessary barriers to assessment. Assessments have been designed to promote equal opportunities while maintaining the integrity of the qualification.

For guidance on assessment arrangements for disabled candidates and/or those with additional support needs, please follow the link to the Assessment Arrangements web page: www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/14977.html

Guidance on inclusive approaches to delivery and assessment in this Course is provided in the *Course and Unit Support Notes*.

What this assessment covers

This assessment contributes 30% of the total marks for the Course.

The assessment will assess the skills, knowledge and understanding specified for the assignment in the *Course Assessment Specification*. These are:

- ◆ selecting an appropriate business topic or issue
- ◆ collecting information/evidence relating to the context of the assignment from a range of sources
- ◆ making decisions/solving problems by applying relevant business concepts and theories to the context of the assignment
- ◆ analysing and evaluating the business information/evidence relating to the assignment
- ◆ drawing conclusions from business data, concepts and evidence from the range of sources used
- ◆ communicating business reasoning and conclusions with clarity
- ◆ producing an appropriately formatted business report for others that clearly communicates the findings

Assessment

Purpose

The purpose of this assessment is to generate evidence for the assignment Component of the added value of this Course.

The assignment will address challenge and application by requiring the candidate to apply higher order cognitive skills within a Business Management context. It will require candidates to apply planning, research, analytical, evaluative, decision-making and communication skills to produce a business report.

Assessment overview

The assignment is sufficiently open and flexible to allow personalisation and choice.

The assignment has two stages:

- ◆ planning and gathering evidence — this should take about 6.5 hours
- ◆ producing the report — this should take about 1.5 hours

Candidates should choose an area of study from the Course and apply a business analytical technique to it, which will allow them to demonstrate application of knowledge and understanding and higher order cognitive skills.

Candidates will undertake research, gather and select appropriate information, analyse the information selected and prepare a business report. The report should focus on a business issue that will allow the candidate to suggest recommendations for the organisation in terms of how it relates to the issue and/or to meeting the needs of the organisation's internal and/or external stakeholders.

Examples of business analytical techniques that candidates may wish to consider using for the business report are SWOT analysis, ratio analysis, product portfolio analysis, PESTEC analysis or any other suitable business analytical technique.

Choosing a suitable business issue and analytical technique can be daunting for some candidates. It may be helpful for candidates to issue details of the assignment early on in the Course; this will allow them time to assimilate all the information and to start thinking about options they may wish to consider as the Course progresses.

Assessors can, however, provide reasonable assistance in supporting candidates to select an appropriate issue, analytical technique and organisation to focus their report on. They may also guide candidates as to the likely availability and accessibility of resources for their chosen issue, analytical technique and organisation.

Examples of issues/analytical techniques could include:
How effective is the product portfolio of xxx?
A SWOT analysis of xxx to assess its current position.
Product extension strategies used by xxx to maintain/increase its market share of xxx (a product).
What quality measures should xxx use to maintain/increase customer satisfaction?

Assessment conditions

Assessors must exercise their professional responsibility in ensuring that evidence submitted by a candidate is the candidate's own work.

This assignment has two stages; a planning and gathering evidence stage, and a report production stage. These two stages may run concurrently.

For example, the candidate could prepare their findings after each section of research and analysis is complete and build-up their report over time. Alternatively, the report may be completed once all of the research and analysis has been done.

While the assessor may offer guidance during the research and analysis stage, the candidate should be working with no assistance during the report production stage.

The research for this assignment should be done at a time when the candidates are ready to undertake this piece of work. This assignment will be carried out over a period of time and may be undertaken alongside the learning and teaching of the Units or, alternatively, once the Units have been completed.

The planning and research for the report will be carried out under some supervision and control. However, the production of the report should be completed in class time and under a higher degree of control compared to the planning and research stage. Candidates should be given sufficient time to carry out their research to complete the report for submission.

Conditions relating to conducting the assignment will vary at each stage.

Stage one – Planning and gathering evidence

During this stage there are no restrictions on the resources which candidates can access. However, it is recommended that candidates make use of organisations' websites and other information rather than contacting organisations directly. The level of research involved in this assignment does not necessarily require direct contact with the organisation.

Although candidates should be given sufficient time to carry out their research, analysis and preparation for producing their report, it is recommended that this stage be completed within a time period of up to 6.5 hours.

Reasonable assistance may be given on a generic basis to a class or group of candidates, but can also be given to candidates on an individual basis. When reasonable assistance is given on a one-to-one basis in the context of something the candidate has already produced or demonstrated, there is a danger it becomes support for assessment and assessors need to be aware that this may be going beyond reasonable assistance.

During this stage, reasonable assistance may include:

- ◆ advising candidates on a suitable issue to research/analytical technique to apply/organisation to base their report on
- ◆ advising candidates on possible sources of information
- ◆ clarifying instructions/requirements of the assignment
- ◆ checking on interim progress

Although this stage is completed under some supervision and control, it is possible for candidates to complete part of this stage outwith the learning and teaching setting. Assessors should put in place mechanisms to authenticate the candidate's work and ensure that plagiarism has not taken place. For example:

- ◆ regular checkpoint/progress meetings with candidates
- ◆ short spot-check personal interviews
- ◆ checklists which record activity/progress

Stage two – Producing the report

This stage should be carried out under a high degree of supervision and control. Candidates must not communicate with one another and must be in sight of the assessor during the time they are producing their report. The assessor must not give any assistance during this stage.

The report should be up to six A4 pages in length and may be completed at the end of stage one or at appropriate points during stage one. Overall, this should take no longer than 1.5 hours.

During the report production stage, candidates will be permitted to access any of their research evidence but must only submit a maximum of four A4 pages of research evidence, as an appendix attached to the report, to support their findings.

Candidates must make reference to their research evidence in their report. This evidence will support the analysis/interpretation and conclusions/recommendations sections of the report. This will ensure candidates have the opportunity to achieve up to the maximum marks available for these sections.

When candidates are producing their reports, assessors may not:

- ◆ direct candidates to which research findings they should use
- ◆ provide feedback on drafts, including marking
- ◆ provide model responses

Evidence to be gathered

The following candidate evidence is required for this assessment:

- ◆ The business report of up to six A4 pages produced by the candidate
- ◆ Appendices of up to four A4 pages to support the report. Examples of appendices may include:
 - statistical, graphical or numerical data
 - interview questions and/or responses
 - survey results/questionnaire and/or results
 - list of internet search engine results
 - extracts/photos/images from appropriate websites
 - newspaper article or extracts
 - notes taken from a visit or a talk
 - notes taken from a written or audio visual source
 - a list of all the sources of information used
- ◆ Overall, candidate submission should not exceed 10 pages (ie up to six pages for the report and up to four pages of appendices).

General Marking Instructions

In line with SQA's normal practice, the following General Marking Instructions are addressed to the marker. They will also be helpful for those preparing candidates for Course assessment.

Evidence will be submitted to SQA for external marking.

All marking will be quality assured by SQA.

General Marking Principles for assignment

This information is provided to help you understand the general principles you must apply when marking candidate responses to this assignment. These principles must be read in conjunction with the detailed Marking Instructions, which identify the key features required in candidate responses.

- (a) Marks for each candidate response must always be assigned in line with these General Marking Principles and the Detailed Marking Instructions for this assessment.
- (b) Marking should always be positive. This means that, for each candidate response, marks are accumulated for the demonstration of relevant skills, knowledge and understanding: they are not deducted from a maximum on the basis of errors or omissions.
- (c) In producing their report, candidates will be awarded marks for specific skills, knowledge and understanding as follows:

Providing an introduction to the report

Marks will be awarded for stating the purpose of the report and for giving an overview of the issue and analytical technique selected.

Evaluating the usefulness and reliability of a range of sources of information

Marks will be awarded for explaining the suitability of the research sources used. At least two research sources must be used to gain full marks for this section.

Analysing and interpreting information from a range of sources

Marks will be awarded for making analytical and/or interpretive comments which are based on the information/evidence collected. More than one comment may be made about each piece of information/evidence.

Analysis and interpretation will involve reviewing and evaluating evidence to make a comment, drawing out and relating implications or providing an explanation.

Reaching conclusions and making recommendations supported by the evidence gathered

Marks will be awarded for drawing conclusions and making recommendations based on the evidence and any other relevant information, such as business theory, linked to the purpose of the report.

Using a suitable format to collate and report on findings

Marks will be awarded for accurately and concisely summarising findings under appropriate headings, and for consistently applying business terminology.

Administrative information

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History of changes

Version	Description of change	Authorised by	Date
1.1	'Making good use of display styles' deleted from last paragraph of 'General Marking Principles for assignment' section.	Qualifications Manager	September 2015

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