Examiners' Report
Principal Examiner Feedback

January 2024

Pearson Edexcel International Advanced Subsidiary
and International Advanced Level
In Business (WBS11 01)

Introduction

Overall candidates appeared to be well prepared for this exam and the paper proved to be accessible for many students. There was a wide range of marks with some very good responses seen. Most students attempted all questions which indicates students did not struggle to finish the paper within the allocated time.

Students were generally well prepared for the 6 mark questions and high marks were achieved on these questions.

However, it is evident that some students are still failing to provide counterbalance on the 'Discuss', 'Assess' and 'Evaluate' questions. Students are reminded that these questions should always include evaluative points. Whilst this has improved in recent years, often the counter argument is too brief and generic.

It is worth again reminding students of the need to read the case studies carefully and use the evidence provided to apply context to all responses. Lack of context was particularly noticeable on question 3, where many students wrote about a range of financial methods than may be used by a business but did not use the extracts provided to write specifically about Google and its employees.

Question 1a: Many students showed basic understanding of the term demand but did not provide a clear definition. In many instances students referred to needs and wants rather than the willingness or ability to purchase a product.

Question 1b: This income elasticity of demand calculation has been tested a number of times and some students performed well on this question to gain full marks. A small number of responses scored 0 with no evidence of YED and others mixed up the formula. Some candidates showed the final answer as a percentage (3%) which is incorrect and they were not awarded full marks, however were able to gain marks for correct workings.

Question 1c: There were some good answers to this question with students recognising the advantages of a strong brand. It is clear that students are well practised in the six-mark questions. Many students were able to use the source booklet to contextualise their points and develop their answers to provide analysis.

Question 1d: It was pleasing that the majority of students had some knowledge of the design mix and understood the term aesthetics. Many recognised that aesthetics it is the first thing which appeals to customers particularly in the fashion industry. However, the counterbalance was generally quite vague or generic, Students spend too much time providing points of analysis then spending too little

time providing detailed counterbalance. Some students confused economic manufacture/cost with price which caused some to lose out on marks.

Question 1e The Boston matrix has been examined many times and students appear to understand that the matrix measures market size and market growth. Some attempted to match *Meqnes* products with the matrix categories e.g. cash cows and stars. However, as seen on previous papers many students are unable to explain why the matrix is useful to a business and how it can help make marketing decisions. Overall, the question was poorly answered, and centres are urged to focus on the uses and limitations of the strategic model as well as the drawing of the matrix and identification of cash cows, stars, question marks and dogs.

Question 2a This was well answered with a high number of candidates gaining the full 2 marks for defining social objectives. Responses included definitions such as: goal, aim target, and related this to the environment and the social wellbeing of communities. Some repeated the word objective in the answer rather than referring to a goal or an aim, and only scored one mark.

Question 2b It was disappointing that many students failed to pick up full marks for this calculation which required students to calculate average revenue over a four-year period. Whilst students appeared to understand how to calculate an average figure, they failed to add the currency ($) and units (billions) to their answers. This resulting in many students losing 1 or 2 marks. Students should be reminded of the need to check their answers to ensure currency and units are included where required.

Question 2c: In comparison to the previous time this topic was examined, it was pleasing to see that more students were able to recall supply factors and use them to explain how they might impact the fast-food industry. However, it is still evident that too many students are still confusing supply factors with demand factors, such as trends and advertising, which appears a common error.

Question 2d: This question was not answered particularly well.
Some students showed understanding of emotional branding but failed to use the extracts well to contextualise their answers. Many students simply focussed on the ethical behaviour of fast-food businesses instead of addressing why emotional branding might benefit the business. Counterbalance provide to this answer was generic in most cases. Simply saying emotional branding may not work is likely to be insufficient to reach level 3 in the mark scheme. Counterbalance must be explained in the same way that points of analysis are explained and developed.

Question 2e: Some students did not understand the concept of competitive pricing. Many students wrote that it was charging a very low price, and they were possibly confusing this with penetration pricing. Counter arguments were often lacking in details but we saw some very perceptive counterarguments. For instance, some students explained that the use of competitive pricing may be inappropriate for a start-up business due to its lack of economies of scale compared to larger and more established competitors.

Question 3 Most students showed basic understanding of financial incentives but disappointingly many candidates did not appear to use the source material at all. It is possible that some did not turn the final page and see the information about software engineer's salaries.

It was noted by examiners that a significant number of candidates wrote about piece rate to produce an essay that looked like it had been a practise task in class, these answers were generic and unrelated to the extracts given. Where candidates did use the sources, answers often gained high marks. A number of candidates were able to successfully bring in theories such as Maslow and Taylor to support their answers.

Very few students appear well practiced at writing a detailed conclusion/recommendation. Too many conclusions simply repeat the points already given and fail to show the significance of competing arguments or provide a justified recommendation.

Summary

Based on their performance on this paper, candidates are offered the following advice:

- Students should be reminded that they should show their workings on the calculation questions. They should also give units and currency where required.

- Many students are still failing to provide counterbalance in their answers. For discuss, analyse and evaluation questions students must always provide a balanced assessment. The answer must not simply provide a one-sided view.

- Students should practise providing a detailed conclusion which does not simply rely on repeating/summarising points already given. The conclusion should weigh up competing arguments to propose a justified solution or recommendation.