



Examiners' Report Principal Examiner Feedback

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Pearson Edexcel International Advanced
Subsidiary
and International Advanced Level
In Business (WBS12 01)

General

The consistent structure of the paper meant the questions in this series were split into 3 sections as in all previous series for this qualification. Sections A and B each had five questions, ranging from 2 to 10 marks and Section C had one 20 mark question. Once again, it was evident many candidates had used papers from previous series to practice their responses and especially pleasing to see, note had been taken of many of the points in previous examiner reports.

In general, candidates appeared to be well prepared for most of the topic areas on this paper. However, there were some topics where that did not appear to be the case. The ability of the most able candidates was shown through relating their knowledge and understanding to the evidence presented, whereas those struggling with such concepts typically answered questions with a more generic approach and/or inaccuracies. The levels of response questions required understanding to be developed and applied to the relevant evidence. Although this approach was adopted by some, there were instances where a more basic understanding was demonstrated, thus limiting the attainment of higher levels. There did not appear to be many issues with the length of time students needed to complete all questions set.

Report on individual questions

Section A

Question 1a

There were 2 parts to the question to define the term 'quality' and examiners were looking for references to 'product features' and 'differentiate' or equivalent. Candidates had to provide both parts to gain 2 marks. Examples were occasionally used by candidates but, as in always the case with 'define' questions, no marks are available for these. Partial explanations were awarded 1 mark. Although many candidates provided an accurate definition, some were too vague, meaning the required knowledge was either only partially, or not demonstrated at all.

Tip: Unlike with higher mark tariff questions, reference to information in the extract(s) is **not** required for 'define' questions.

Question 1b

Many candidates were able to calculate the correct average daily capacity utilisation and so were awarded 4 marks. Marks could be awarded for showing workings but these were not necessary if the correct answer was shown. Some candidates were able to show knowledge of the formula and/or apply the correct figures meaning some marks could be awarded for accurate knowledge and/or application.

Tip: It is important to state the answer to two decimal places when required by a calculate question, as well as to use the correct units. By doing this, full marks can be achieved.

Question 1c

Good responses were able to analyse two possible reasons why 4 buses continue to operate daily in each direction. The reasons could relate to coping with changes in demand, meeting customer needs, competition or any other suitable response.

Reasons given were not necessarily applied and/or analysed appropriately. Stating a part of the extract in isolation is NOT application. It must be applied to the reason, for example, 'As a result of changes in demand throughout the year, Ardit Tours may want to offer customers different options of when to travel'. To analyse this point, a cause or consequence is needed. 'Analyse' questions do not have any AO4 (evaluation) marks.

Tip: There are 2 knowledge marks, 2 application marks and 2 analysis marks for analyse questions. Although the knowledge marks can be given for an appropriate definition instead of stating 2 ways/disadvantages/reasons etc., it is not possible to apply or analyse the definition and so marks are likely to be limited with this approach and students should focus on stating, then applying and analysing the two ways/reasons/disadvantages etc.

Question 1d

This question was marked using the levels-based marking grid. For an 8 mark 'discuss' question there are three levels. Examiners read the whole response and decide which level is the best match. If a response is lacking certain characteristics, examiners move towards the bottom of the level. If it is a strong match they will move towards the top and this approach is used for all levels of response questions on the paper.

There was a varied range of discussion regarding whether Arditi Tours should be concerned about its margin of safety. Stronger responses presented chains of reasoning based on the evidence in the extracts such as calculating a daily margin of 8 passengers, thus enough to be reasonably comfortable based on the April figures. This was countered well with use of the extracts, such as the rising cost of diesel and/or the fluctuating demand. Some students failed to achieve a higher level because the response was limited to just a reference to the generic factors and/or without presenting a chain of reasoning.

Tip: The command word 'discuss' requires a two-sided argument. If a candidate doesn't provide a two-sided argument or presents a generic answer, they would be unlikely to reach the higher levels. A conclusion is not required for an 8 mark discuss question.

Question 1e

This was a levels-based question with 4 levels. Although many candidates showed a good understanding of sales revenue, they were not always able to apply this to Arditi Tours. Analysis of price elasticity of demand was often effective, especially when considered with evidence such as there being a number of competitors. However, some responses presented were generic therefore, reducing progression through the levels.

Similarly, attainment of higher levels requires developed chains of reasoning, in context, in order to assess the points made. Without this, the higher-level descriptors are not matched, meaning only a low-level mark will be achieved. For applied responses, examiners were looking for evidence from the extract to be used and not simply be stated without being relevant to the point(s) being made. Assessment could again focus on elasticity but also on other ways to increase revenue, such as the quality and services offered.

Tip: The command word 'assess' will always require a more in-depth development and some evaluation of the arguments compared to the command word 'discuss'. Candidates are encouraged to use a range of relevant evidence throughout the response to highlight their points and NOT to simply list (generic) factors without developing chains of reasoning or providing an assessment.

Section B

Question 2a

There were 2 parts to the question to define the term 'brand' and examiners were looking for references to 'a feature of a product' and 'to distinguish from competitors' or equivalent, such as specific features or image/logo etc. Candidates had to provide both parts to gain 2 marks. Examples were occasionally used by candidates but, as in the previous 'define' question, no marks are available for these. Partial explanations were awarded 1 mark.

Tip: This question will always have 2 marks available for a definition so ensure that your response is fully developed and is not a vague attempt at explaining the term.

Question 2b

Explain questions have an assessment objective make-up of 1 x AO1, 2 x AO2 and 1 x AO3. This is exactly the same as other types of 4-mark questions (construct and calculate). Therefore, with only 1 knowledge mark available, this needed to come from giving one reason for a trademark being registered by Grupo Tamazula and not from a definition. Further marks can only be gained by using the extract (for up to 2 application marks) and/or analysing the reason. Just stating that a brand name would make it stand out did not answer the question, it was necessary to explain a trademark.

Tip: Always ensure one way/advantage/reason etc. is stated because this is essential for obtaining marks on explain questions.

Question 2c

More able candidates were able to analyse two ways Grupo Tamazula may remain competitive. A good use of application was seen in many responses but sometimes a part of the extract was simply stated separately, rather than used in the analysis. This does not allow access to the application marks.

Analysis of differentiation of the sauce, offering lower prices, and using up to date equipment to produce the latest requirements of products for customers, were successful in scoring high marks. However, a description of a factors just lifted from the extracts meant some candidates did not achieve many marks because this did not answer the question.

Tip: Make sure the extract is USED to apply the knowledge, not simply copied directly into a stand-alone sentence.

Question 2d

Like 1d, this was marked using the levels-based marking grid and consisted of 3 levels. Candidates were generally able to provide a response which discussed the benefits of being a public limited company but some did not apply this appropriately or provide an assessment. Therefore, these responses did not match the descriptors of the higher levels.

Better answers were able to apply evidence from the extracts to provide developed chains of reasoning, such as discussion about the ability to raise share capital potentially leading to the purchase of modern equipment and/or fund research regarding the US and Canadian export markets.

However, general assertions with regards to having limited liability meaning Grupo Tamazula would be willing to risk/spend more were unlikely to be successful in matching level descriptors of the higher levels.

Tip: The command word 'discuss' requires both sides of an argument. Some candidates only look at one side, thus restricting their marks due to not providing an awareness of competing arguments.

Question 2e

As with 1e, this was a levels-based question with 4 levels. Many candidates were able to provide a good understanding of waste management but not all were able to provide a developed assessment regarding whether Grupo Tamazula could keep it to a minimum.

Some candidates showed a lack of knowledge of this topic area and attempted to answer the question with guesswork. However, this approach did not result in achieving many marks. On occasion, candidates scored zero marks because they showed no understanding of waste, as referenced in the specification.

Tip: As with 1e, the command word 'assess' will always require more depth and development of the concept and chains of reasoning compared to the command word 'discuss'. Any area of the specification can be targeted by any of the questions on this paper. It is therefore important to give sufficient teaching and learning time to all topics on the specification.

Section C

Question 3

This is the highest mark question on the paper, worth 20 marks and with 4 levels. However, although the understanding demonstrated by candidates was often reasonable, some candidates struggled to apply the extracts appropriately or provide balanced arguments. Some candidates lacked understanding of internal and external causes of business failure. Rewriting the extracts to state the information provided to candidates in the first place, rather than answering the question, did not enable the candidate to progress through the levels.

As is shown by the indicative content in the mark scheme, there were a variety of points that could be developed in answer to the question but merit was not restricted to these. However, examiners were looking for an awareness of the various internal and external causes and effects they may have had on the business, along with developed chains of reasoning.

In addition, higher level attainment came from an awareness of competing arguments such as contrasting the likely impact of internal causes with external causes but also, by evaluating the likelihood of the causes analysed.

Tip: This is an 'evaluate' question meaning that ideas needed to be developed and presented with understanding of the significance of competing arguments. To achieve the top level, amongst other things detailed in the mark scheme, an effective conclusion is sought.

Summary

Candidates are offered the following advice and reminders:

- Questions 1a and 2a are worth two marks each and so will need two parts in the definition of the term to attain both marks. Examples are not rewarded.
- Be careful to read the whole of the question. Certain requirements are given which are not always acted upon by some candidates, e.g. only providing **one reason** in 'explain' questions.
- Candidates need to understand the requirements of the command words in the questions. This will allow them to access marks requiring each of the four assessment objectives.
- Quantitative Skills will be tested throughout the paper. These may be in the form of diagrams/graphs, calculations or using the data in the Extracts to provide the application in the questions.
- Application marks will not be awarded for simply repeating evidence in the extracts. The evidence needs to be **used** in the response.
- The command word 'Discuss' requires a two-sided argument in order to achieve full marks.
- There may be more answer space provided than you need to write your responses. This is also indicated on the front cover of the question paper.
- The specification for WBS12 states that questions may require students to draw on their knowledge from WBS11
- The use of relevant evidence is required throughout and this can be from the Extracts provided or, often, from candidates' own knowledge. The Extracts are there for a reason – so please use them!