# Examiners' Report

# Principal Examiner Feedback

# January 2022

Pearson Edexcel International A Level
In Business  (WBS14 01)

## General

This third sitting of the new specification WBS14 paper seemed to go well despite the ongoing difficulties of the previous years. The paper discriminated well, with candidates accessing a wide range of marks, with some good, and occasionally very good, responses to the questions set.

Strong candidates did well, with some excellent and thoughtful responses, particularly for the longer questions. By contrast, there were also some very weak responses that showed little understanding of, or even familiarity with, the specification content.

The main reasons for some students underachieving were the usual ones of not heeding command words and not reading the questions carefully enough. Command words are still being ignored by a sizeable number. Instructions to 'Assess' and 'Evaluate' were not followed by some candidates.

Some of the students missed out on marks because they did not answer the question that was set. This was a particular problem for Q1d, Q1e and Q3 where a failure to read the wording of the question carefully, cost them valuable marks.

It is worth reminding future students of the need to apply proper context to all responses. Repeating generic or stock answers or just copying the text from the case study will not access the higher levels of the mark scheme.

## Report on individual questions

## SECTION A

## Question 1a

This was answered well with most candidates knowing what inorganic growth was and most were able to identify a relevant advantage, such as rapid growth or a reduction in competition. Use of context was generally good but attempted analysis often lacked a cause or consequence.

Some candidates are still defining the key term in these four mark questions; it is not needed and is not part of the mark scheme.

## Question 1b

Those candidates that knew the right formula inevitably did well on this question. Unfortunately, many did not and missed out on what should have been a straightforward few marks. Others lost a mark by missing the percentage sign or only calculating to one decimal place.

## Question 1c

A joint venture is a collaboration between two independent businesses on a specific project or venture. It is <u>not</u> a merger or a takeover, which was what many candidates went on to mistakenly discuss. As a result some candidates failed to reach the higher levels of the mark scheme. For those that did understand the nature of a joint venture it proved to be a relatively straightforward question.

Centres should note that although there is no requirement to provide a conclusion on this question, balance (evaluation) is definitely needed. A number of otherwise good answers failed to do this and just examined the benefits.

## Question 1d

Instead of focusing on the impact of  FDI on the *local* economy many focused on the impact of FDI on the *national* economy which was not the question set. The specification does separate the two. Once again, this illustrates the need for students to read the question wording carefully and think about their response before putting pen to paper.

For the most part, those that did make this distinction answered the question well. The impact on local jobs and local businesses were discussed with some development looking at the chance of acquiring new skills and improvement in local amenities. Balance often took the form of damage to the environment, strain on local infrastructure or the transient and temporary nature of some FDI.

## Question 1e

Supply chain considerations are part of the specification, under the heading of International business ethics. It has sub-sections on pay and working conditions and exploitation of labour and child labour. The extract used in the paper was all about the ethical stance taken by one particular business. It was therefore puzzling that many candidate chose to ignore ethics completely and produced generic answers on suppliers and JIT production. Others just copied out large chunks from the extract, with little in the way of development or analysis as to the impact an ethical stance might have on a business.

Those that did produce a good response considered the positive aspects, such as consumer approval, brand reputation, employee motivation and altruism. Balance looked at the costs involved, possible shareholder pressure and greenwashing. Context was mostly from the extract with disappointingly few candidates providing their own examples.

## SECTION B

Responses to the two 20 mark questions proved to be rather uneven. Q2 was generally tackled well with good understanding and development. Q3 proved more problematic for many students, either because they seemed unsure of the topic or because they had misunderstood the question. The mean mark for Q3 was significantly lower than Q2.

For the students that did not do so well in the 20 mark questions, it was usually because they had simply copied out, or re-written the evidence, with little or no attempt at analysis or evaluation. Good conclusions were rare; simply re-writing previously made points adds nothing to the answer.

As ever, the key to doing well in these longer questions is to develop the arguments and support them with evidence.

## Question 2

MNCs are an accessible part of the specification and most students had a reasonable attempt at the question. Good answers looked at a range of options for controlling MNCs including, taxes, fines, regulation, pressure groups and social media. Many then pointed out that any success depended upon a range of factors, including the relative size and power of the MNC, whether it sold to consumers or other businesses, its importance to the host economy and the relative strength of social media. It was pleasing to see that many of these responses made good use of their own examples to provide application and context.

Weaker responses were characterised by repetition of the extract and a failure to look beyond its confines by just discussing China. Others were too brief, lacked development, relevant context and chains of reasoning. Balance tended to be simplistic and undeveloped.

## Question 3

Most candidates were aware of protectionism in general but many did not read the question carefully enough. The question specifically asked candidates to evaluate the impact on global businesses. Unfortunately, many launched into a generic or pre-prepared answer on the pros and cons of protectionism in general and its effects on an economy. Discussion was often based on domestic businesses, the balance of trade or even exchange rates. This lack of focus on the question limited their ability to reach the higher levels of the mark scheme.

There were some good answers which clearly understood the potential impact on the sales and revenues of global businesses. Balance came in the form of PED, effect of trading blocs, the short and long run positions and good use of the statistical evidence. Once again it was pleasing to see good use of examples from the candidate's own knowledge.

There was very little evidence to suggest that candidates did not have enough time to complete the paper.

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

- Do read the question carefully and answer the question that is set

- Do watch out for command words such as Assess or Evaluate

- Do use examples to illustrate your argument

- Do use the language of the subject and avoid generalities

- Do watch your timing and do not spend too long on one question

- Do write concisely (and neatly please!)

- Do add a relevant conclusion to the longer questions