



Pearson
Edexcel

Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

October 2021

Pearson Edexcel International A Level

Business (WBS14 01)

General

This second sitting of the new specification WBS14 paper seemed to go well despite the ongoing difficulties of the year. 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.. Some students missed out several whole questions.

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

Demand and supply diagrams are a key part of understanding the business world and this should have been a straightforward start to the paper and an easy 4 marks. Unfortunately, many chose to shift the wrong curve

Question 1b

There were several characteristics that could have been chosen to answer this question. Many candidates chose the presence of a large service sector and successfully used the evidence about Australia to support and explain why it was a defining characteristic.

It is important to note the wording of the question which asks for just one characteristic. Many offered a list, which could only score one knowledge mark. The key here is to identify and then develop the required factor with supporting evidence

Question 1c

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

There were some good answers here that gave a good explanation of the impact of FDI on the growth of the economy in terms of GDP, the balance of payments and tax revenues with suitable evaluation and balance.

Question 1d

For the most part this question was well answered, with students showing good understanding of the term and able to place it in context and add balance, usually by comparing it to other factors that may be more important in some circumstances. Good answers were able to give examples from wider reading which was pleasing to see.

The majority could present a good analysis of what ease of business meant and why it helped in setting up a production location. Nevertheless, there were a significant number of low-scoring answers where brief answers, lack of development and chains of reasoning were the usual problems.

Question 1e

The question about the importance of trade liberalisation to globalisation proved to be tricky for many candidates who wrote a lot about the former and ignored the latter. Too many candidates interpreted the question as the pros and cons of trade liberalisation which was not the point of the question. Some that did attempt to bring in globalisation just said that trade liberalisation did lead to globalisation without explaining how or why.

Better answers did make the link explicit and then added valid balance by looking at the impact in comparison to other events including political change, communication, transports costs, MNCs and the WTO

SECTION B

Both case studies and questions were accessible to students and acted as good platforms from which students could build their answers. 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, this was particularly the case for Q2. 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

The marketing mix was well understood with many thorough explanations of the importance of both promotion and product. Unfortunately there was much repetition of the evidence with little consideration of the point of the question. Balance tended to be simplistic and undeveloped, with comments such as 'it is expensive' or 'it takes time'. If the other elements of the marketing mix, price and place, were mentioned it was often brief, simply stating that they were important too but without explaining why.

More considered responses saw the two as interlinked and examined their relative importance by discussing such variables as the nature of the market, the level of competition and the stages of the product life cycle. Good answers also looked at the other elements of the marketing mix, showing how they in turn had an impact on the importance of either promotion or product. The use of examples beyond the case studies was usually a sign of a better quality response.

Question 3

Most candidates were aware that there may be a trade-off between ethical behaviour and financial performance and looked at the shareholders' expectations of profit as the main stakeholder group. Other responses looked at a range of stakeholder groups that may have potentially experienced conflict including employees, consumers, managers and suppliers. Balance was usually achieved by comparing the possible higher costs involved with enhanced reputation and consumer sales. Better candidates contrasted the short and long run positions.

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

Summary

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