



Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

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Pearson Edexcel International Advanced Level In
Business

(WBS14 01)

For most students, this was an accessible exam paper. The questions 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. Once again, 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 read the question carefully enough. This was the case for question 1e on exchange rates, where candidates had to consider the impact on a global business based in Turkey, which many chose to interpret as the Turkish economy.

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.

SECTION A

Question 1a

This was a straightforward start to the paper for many candidates. Nevertheless, a sizable number made elementary mistakes, either shifting the wrong curve or drawing the curves the wrong way round. For these candidates some revision of earlier units would not have gone amiss. It is worth bearing in mind that WBS14 is synoptic and can access knowledge from Units 1, 2 and 3.

Question 1b

There were several possible disadvantages of the tariff that could have been used. Most chose to look at the threat of possible retaliation from other countries, others considered the impact on prices and possible inflation.

Candidates should remember that on this type of question a definition is not needed and does not achieve any marks. By contrast, there are two marks available for application or a contextualised response and many candidates are still missing out on these marks.

Question 1c

Unfortunately, many candidates either did not know what HDI was, or had only a partial understanding of what the index is composed of. Without that knowledge, it is difficult to answer the question and build a convincing discussion as to how useful the index is as an indicator of growth. This shows how important basic subject knowledge and revision is. Those responses that tried to bluff their way did not convince and achieved low marks. Some candidates were sidetracked and wrote about the benefits of economic growth for Turkey which did not answer the question.

By contrast, those that clearly understood HDI and its three components were usually able to show why it could be a useful indicator of growth and what its potential weaknesses were and consequently achieved good marks.

Question 1d

For the most part this was answered well. The area of ethical behaviour and its importance or otherwise to a global business was generally well understood. The question specifically asked about the importance of environmental consideration for a global business. Some candidates moved away from this and talked about other areas of ethical behaviour or its wider implications for individuals or governments.

Those that did stay focused on the question used the evidence well, mainly referring to the positive impact on sales and brand reputation, or the need to comply with legislation, or to avoid actions from pressure groups. Balance was usually shown by looking at the cost implications of being environmentally aware and the possible stakeholder conflicts that might arise.

Question 1e

Predictably, this was the less well-answered of the two 12-mark questions. Exchange rates are always a tricky topic for many candidates, with some getting rather confused over the different impacts of the appreciation and the depreciation of currencies. Once again, some candidates did not read the question carefully enough and looked at the impact on the Turkish economy rather than a global business based in Turkey. This did not answer the question that was set and so did not gain many marks.

Better responses looked at the relative impact of exchange rate movements on a global business that imported or exported. Evaluation was often shown by looking at the relative amount and cost of imported materials to the value of exported finished goods, the relative price elasticities, the size and duration of exchange rate changes and other factors that might be just as important to a global business.

SECTION B

Both case studies and questions were accessible to students and acted as good platforms from which they could build convincing answers. The topics of niche markets and the marketing mix are popular ones and were widely understood by most candidates.

As has been pointed out in previous reports, the reasons that students that did not do so well in the 20-mark questions, were 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 added little to the answer. The use of examples beyond the case studies was disappointingly rare.

Once again, the key to doing well in these longer questions is to fully develop the chains of reasoning, look at the competing arguments and support them with evidence before reaching a supported conclusion or judgement.

Question 2

The benefits of operating in a global niche market were widely understood and most responses were able to identify the main points such as lack of competition, brand loyalty and premium pricing. The extract provided a lot of evidence to use and unfortunately, a significant minority simply rewrote the extract and added very little of merit by way of analysis or evaluation.

Better candidates were able to expand on the extract, often bringing in other examples to illustrate the points being made. Balance was usually seen in terms of limited scope for expansion, possibility of takeover as the niche grows and the possible temporary nature of some markets. The use of examples beyond the case studies was often a sign of a better-quality response.

Question 3

The marketing mix is another well understood topic. However, perhaps even more so than with Q2, many candidates just rewrote the extract, describing what Netflix was doing with its prices and products. By doing so, little attempt was made to answer the question and discuss which was the most important, or what else may matter such as the other 2 Ps. Hardly any candidates discussed a business other than Netflix.

Better responses produced wide-ranging discussions arguing that it depended on where the business was operating and who its competitors were. Good balance came from looking at the relative wealth of consumers in different markets and their differing abilities to pay, the nature of the product and the degree to which it was tailored to a particular market's needs, the degree of competition and the relative importance of place and promotion.

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