
L3 Certificate

Applied Business

ABS4 (Managing and leading people)
Report on the Examination

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General Comments

The majority of students were able to respond effectively to the demands of the paper and their performances demonstrated a number of strengths. Many possessed broad and relevant subject knowledge which is an essential starting point for success on this paper. This enabled them to tackle questions based on topics from different parts of the specification. In addition, there was plenty of evidence of students being able to explain, analyse and evaluate as required. It was relatively rare for a student not to make use of the scenarios that were provided throughout the paper. The majority used their time efficiently and were thus able to respond effectively and proportionately to the 20-mark final question.

Despite the above, there was a range of shortcomings in the ways in which students tackled this paper. Some devoted too much time when responding to the three-mark questions and a minority used additional pages to complete their responses. Some students did not define the key terms that were emboldened within the questions nor did they focus their responses on these concepts. Examination technique in a wider sense remains poor for a minority of students. It was not uncommon for students to offer evaluation on questions 8, 9 & 10; this is not required and no marks are available on these questions for this skill. Equally, a minority offered both sides of an argument irrespective of the wording of the question. For example, on question 10, some students provided reasons why Vegan Place Ltd should not decentralise despite the wording of the question.

Finally, some students appear to use writing frames as a basis for responding to questions on this paper. This can lead to formulaic responses which do not match the demands of the question. Students should consider what the question requires of them and respond fully and consistently to these requirements.

Section A

Question One

Most students demonstrated sound understanding of the role of a leader and were able to answer this question correctly.

Question Two

The majority of students were able to distinguish between the role of a manager and that of a leader and selected the correct answer.

Question Three

It was good to see that students had a sound knowledge of the different types of change to which businesses are subject. About three-quarters of students answered this question correctly.

Question Four

This was the most demanding of the multiple-choice questions. Only about half of the students answered this correctly suggesting limited understanding of ADKAR or a lack of care in reading the question.

Question Five

Most students recognised that a pay rise may not be appropriate in circumstances in which employees do not have guaranteed hours of work. However, many students failed to link their answers to motivational needs. There was some confusion between motivation and motivational needs.

Question Six

Over 40 per cent of students scored three marks on this question. Those who failed to do so appeared unfamiliar with the meaning of the term 'leadership style' or ignored the scenario of skilled labour within which responses should have been framed. There were some unnecessarily lengthy answers to this question. When responding to these three-mark questions, students should define the emboldened term and seek to answer the question in its given context using just one or two sentences.

Question Seven

This was the most challenging of the these three-mark questions. A significant proportion of students did not demonstrate understanding of the term 'position power'; others were unable to offer an explanation of a reason why a manager in a flat organisational structure may make little use of this type of power.

Question Eight

There were some excellent answers to this question. The best responses were based on good understanding of Lewin's force field analysis and used the information in the item to illustrate driving and restraining forces before analysing how the balance between these two forces shaped the decision to publish online.

A common error was for students to use the information to describe the driving and resisting forces but not to develop their answer fully to analyse how this influenced the decision of the managers at Sounds Good! It is essential to meet the demands of the question fully. It was disappointing that around 10 per cent of students failed to demonstrate any relevant knowledge of force field analysis and were not able to make any progress in answering this question.

Question Nine

Most students had a sound knowledge of the concept of motivation and the majority were able to identify and offer some description of a relevant theory. The best responses used their chosen theory and the information in the item to analyse why there were high levels of motivation within the business.

The most common weakness was for students to state a theory of motivation but not to relate it to the scenario. Instead they used more general arguments (such as 'doing different tasks') to support arguments for the existence of high levels of motivation at iHeels.

Question Ten

There were many high-quality responses to this question. A good number of students brought together understanding of decentralisation and the circumstances of Vegan Place Ltd to argue why the company's organisational performance would be improved.

However, a disappointing proportion of students simply described the benefits of decentralisation without linking it to organisational performance. Some students were unsure of the meaning of the term decentralisation and confused it with other concepts such as delayering. Finally, a minority of students presented arguments setting out the disadvantages of decentralising despite the wording of the question. This was a waste of valuable time.

Section B

Question Eleven

There were many very impressive responses to this question with around 18 per cent of students writing level five responses. These responses responded fully to the precise demands of the question and analysed how empowerment and the financial constraints faced by Burnley Fine Cottons Ltd might affect Dipak's ability to implement his organisational changes. Thoughtful responses recognised that empowerment would be likely to support the implementation, while financial constraints would hinder it – at least in the short run. These responses then weighed up the two factors and made and supported a judgement on how they might affect implementation.

There were a range of reasons why some students did not produce such high-quality responses. Some were too ambitious in the scope of their answers. They presented arguments for and against empowerment helping the implementation and did the same for financial constraints. Some of these arguments (for example, how financial constraints might assist implementation) were more difficult to construct and time-consuming. This sometimes detracted from the quality of the judgements that were offered. It would have been better for students to spend a little more time planning an appropriate response to this question and not to rely upon generic structures to answer the question.

Other common weaknesses included a failure to answer the precise question. Thus, some students analysed the effects of the use of empowerment and of financial constraints on the business's performance. This was not what the question asked. A small minority of students simply described the events set out in the case study.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results Statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.

Converting Marks into UMS marks

Convert raw marks into Uniform Mark Scale (UMS) marks by using the link below.

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