
L3 Certificate

Applied Business

ABS3 (Entrepreneurial Opportunities)
Report on the Examination

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General comments

This session was the first assessment of Entrepreneurial Opportunities (ABS3). As an externally set and marked assignment, ABS3 has the following features:

- Two assignments for each academic year – assignments A and B
- Two windows for submitting each assessment each year – January and June
- Learners to complete the external assignment tasks individually and under supervised conditions – drafting with associated tutor feedback is forbidden

In some instances, centres failed to use the set assignment A or B for this academic year. Instead, they used the sample assignment on 3D printing. Centres **must** present their learners with the assignments set for that academic year. Learners can only choose from assignment A and B. They must not use the sample assignment or, as might occur in the future, assignments set in previous academic years.

In some cases, evidence of tutors reviewing learners' draft work and providing formative feedback was witnessed by examiners. This is obviously not acceptable and is always dealt with by AQA's irregularities section.

As a synoptic unit, much of ABS3's content should be familiar to learners. However, as a unit focussing on personal enterprise, it has some unique content:

- Myers-Briggs preferences, personality types and characteristics
- Support network groups
- Customer value propositions
- Contingencies

Whilst differentiation will always be driven by each learner's ability to apply, analyse and make supported judgments, familiarity with the above content is also a key factor. Weaknesses in any one of these four areas of ABS3 resulted in a weaker performance by learners. If all four were poorly grasped, then achieving a pass on this unit proved difficult!

However, the most significant factor affecting performance was the degree to which learners focussed on their **own personal contexts**. Learners who took a generic approach often failed to evidence any genuine desire to consider their personal enterprise and opportunities. These learners filled in their evidence templates in a mechanical fashion and struggled to demonstrate an ability to apply, let alone analyse and make supported judgments.

Thankfully, this approach was in the minority and it was a genuine pleasure to mark much of the evidence presented by learners. When taken in the spirit of enterprise, ABS3 offers learners a genuine opportunity to express themselves and communicate their approach to entrepreneurial opportunities.

Administration

It is recommended that evidence, for each learner, should be held together using one or two treasury tags. Comb binding is **not** recommended. Folders are **not** welcome.

In addition, as an examination, centres should include a completed attendance list indicating any absentees. It is appreciated that attendance lists might not have been made available to tutors, but examination secretaries should know that ABS3 is an examination like any other examination ie attendance lists are the norm and not the exception! If an attendance list has not been provided by AQA, then the examination secretary should request one in advance of the submission date.

PO1 – Understand enterprising behaviour

Successful learners understood the potential opportunities for Pop-Up Retailing or Social Video. They evidenced a sense of direction and understood the risks and uncertainties connected with these opportunities. These learners did not focus on generic risks (eg 'I might not sell much') but offered up specific risk related to the market opportunity. They went on to demonstrate a very clear understanding of their personality type and skills, offering a specific picture of themselves rather than a caricature which less successful learners provided. These successful learners understood how their 'specific picture' might impact on the ways in which they could engage in enterprising behaviour. In short, successful learners demonstrated a sense of purpose from the very first page of the evidence template.

Less successful learners tended to achieve criteria P1, P2, M1 and P3. However, their achievement of P3 was often marginal and the tendency to be generic was often revealed at this point in the evidence template. This often impacted on M2 and D1 where the responses lacked focus and specific context.

The least successful learners made very little attempt to contextualise from the start. The template sections for PO1 were often only completed for the pass criteria. Even here, the evidence was often generic, repetitive or confused and achievement of the pass criteria was doubtful.

Significant misinterpretations of PO1 criteria by centres/learners included:

- P3, where the focus was sometimes entirely on the outcomes of a Myers-Briggs test and where **own** skills were treated as an outcome of this test rather than, as should be the case, evidenced through personal achievements eg participation in local sports activities
- M2 and D1, where learners should focus the ways in which the learner might engage in enterprising behaviour. Too often the responses seemed like essays on generic personality types in the 'world of work' rather than a focussed and practical consideration of how each learner might be enterprising considering their **own** type and skills

PO2 – Investigate customer value propositions for personal enterprise

Successful learners, as in PO1, kept all evidence focussed and firmly in context. You were left in little doubt as to the benefits looked for, willingness to pay and preferred channels of distribution of the two target markets. Examiners had a real sense of learners' support network groups, especially within each learner's family and social groups. The business and government groups were similarly specific and very much local to the learner. Finally, and most crucially, successful learners understood their customer value propositions! Unlike less successful learners, they had a vision of what they might offer customers and they understood why one CVP was superior to the other in terms of their potential target market, levels of competition and nature of their support network groups.

Less successful learners tended to achieve P4, M3, P5 and M4. However, both merit criteria were often marginally achieved as focus began to drift and context diminish. Whilst P6 and M5 were also evidenced, achievement was questionable – did the learner really understand the meaning of a CVP? Often the evidence presented for D2 was brief and repeated aspects of M5 ie it was not achieved.

The least successful learners could just about evidence P4 and P5. However, this achievement was often marginal. P6 was frequently confused and could not be awarded. Evidence for M3 and M4 tended to be generic and lacked context. D2 was seldom completed.

Significant misinterpretations of PO2 criteria by centres/learners included:

- P6, M5 and D2, where the concept of a customer value proposition was sometimes misunderstood. It is not the same as a USP. It is not the same as a marketing mix. It is a succinct statement of the benefits a business is offering customers ie the reason why customers should associate themselves with the business. It is the 'vision' used by businesses for their marketing communications.

PO3 – Consider marketing and operations activities for personal enterprise

Successful learners exited PO2 with a clear understanding of who they were selling to. They also had a vision of what they were offering. Consequently, they could explain the nature and purpose (in relation to CVP) of their outline marketing and operations activities. Having successfully evidenced P7, M6, P8 and M7, these learners had every opportunity to offer supported judgements on the viability of their personal enterprise. Whilst not always successful – supported judgement and focus being key issues – at least they had given themselves the opportunity for success.

Less successful learners struggled to get out of P7 and P8. Whilst they could evidence the pass criteria, their uncertain grasp of CVP meant that achieving the merit and distinction criteria was difficult. Examiners made frequent use of 'BOD' (benefit of doubt) for M6 and M7. Given this, achievement of D3 and D4 was unlikely.

The least successful learners struggled to provide any focussed evidence, Whilst P7 might have been achieved, P8 was often not achieved as nothing was said about processing inputs to deliver outputs. Usually, both merit and distinction sections of the template were left blank.

Significant misinterpretations of PO3 criteria by centres/learners included:

- P8, where learners often ignored or 'glossed-over' the 'processing inputs to deliver outputs' aspect of the criterion. It is essential that this be addressed when completing evidence for P8 and failure to do so will result in this criterion (and the associated M7 and D4 criteria) **not** being awarded
- M6 and M7, where learners failed to focus on the implementation of the customer value proposition. This is essential and failure to do so will result in these criteria **not** being awarded. In turn, this means that D3 and D4 can also not be awarded. Understanding the customer value proposition is key to achieving a high mark on ABS3!

PO4 – Review the risks and uncertainties of personal enterprise

Successful learners made short work of the P9-M8-D5 chain. By now they had a very clear vision of their enterprise and understood the key risks and uncertainties. However, even for these successful learners, P10-M9-D6 presented a real challenge. Often, they did not 'run through the finishing line' to get M9 and D6 ie they lost focus in relation to support network groups. Understandable, but the top prize of 25 out of 25 was reserved for those who kept running!

Less successful learners, by this stage were losing focus and struggled with context. However, most could achieve P9, M8 and P10. The issue was D5, M9 and D6 where evidence was often sketchy or non-existent. In addition, some of these less successful learners struggled with P10 and the concept of a contingency.

The least successful learners barely completed this section of the template. Perhaps P9 and P10 would be attempted, but often ideas had run out and all M and D criteria sections were left blank. Often, only P9 would be achieved with these learners struggling to understand the meaning of a contingency.

Significant misinterpretations of PO3 criteria by centres/learners included:

- P10, M9 and D6, where it was painfully evident that some learners did not understand the meaning of a contingency. Inventing a time machine and going back to put things right is **not** a contingency! Yet this is precisely what many learners thought they could do eg 'I would ensure that this did not happen' or 'I would do things better' etc. A contingency is an action plan for when things go wrong. It is not about correcting mistakes but about coping with events.

Concluding comments

Considering the unit's new content and assessment design, centres and learners are to be congratulated on their efforts for this first assessment of Entrepreneurial Opportunities. If centres reflect on the issues raised in this report, these efforts will be better directed and learner achievement should improve.