
L3 Certificate

Applied Business

ABS4 (Managing and leading people)
Report on the Examination

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General Comments

The performances of students sitting this paper varied widely with nearly every mark between zero and sixty being awarded. Those students who performed strongly demonstrated full and in-depth subject knowledge and the ability to select the theories and models that were relevant to the question in hand. Students achieving high marks also maintained a clear focus on the precise question that was asked. They resisted the temptation to drift into more general responses or to describe numerous models and concepts which had little or no relevance to the question.

The responses of those students who performed less well exhibited several characteristics. Students sometimes failed to allocate their time effectively by, for example, writing extremely long responses to the three-mark questions and then having too little time to explore question 11 fully. The mark allocations and the space available for answers should guide students on how to allocate time. The knowledge of students performing less well was also frequently incomplete. There was a tendency amongst some students to rely on a relatively small range of material and to use this irrespective of the question. Others appeared to have broader subject knowledge but were unable to select that which was most suitable to respond effectively to a particular question. A telling weakness was the inability to focus consistently on the demands of the question. This made it difficult to achieve marks for higher skills such as analysis and evaluation.

Section A

Overall students performed well on the four multiple choice questions, though the final two were significantly more demanding.

Question One

This question was answered correctly by the majority of students who demonstrated clear understanding of factors influencing the performance of a team.

Question Two

This question was answered correctly by just over 80% of students. They demonstrated good knowledge of project teams and matrix structures.

Question Three

This was the most challenging of the four multiple choice questions. Only just over half of the students demonstrated good understanding of the different categories of motivation theory. The question revealed a significant weakness in knowledge and understanding amongst a large number of students.

Question Four

This was also a demanding question. Approximately 40% of students had insufficient knowledge and understanding of ADKAR and factors provoking resistance to change.

Although there were many excellent answers to the three-mark questions, the techniques used by many students was not suitable to the demands of these questions. A good starting point to answering these questions is for students to identify the topic on which the question is based and to define its meaning. In future papers the knowledge base for these questions (and all others on the paper) will be emboldened to assist students. Thereafter, when responding to these three-mark questions, candidates should give the explanation that is called for within the context that is provided. These questions should be answered relatively briefly.

Question Five

There was some misunderstanding of the manager's role of reporting with a number of students not appreciating that this involved upward communication. A disappointing proportion of students ignored the context of potential shop closures thereby limiting the marks available to them.

Question Six

A surprisingly large proportion of students appeared unsure of the meaning of the term 'decentralisation'. Many confused it with delegation or layering. Those who understood the term were normally able to explain how its use might improve communication, but only about 18% of students related this to a large business.

Question Seven

This question identified a gap in the subject knowledge of nearly 50% of students. This high proportion of students had no apparent understanding of the Johnson & Scholes cultural web and were unable to make any progress with their responses. A good proportion of students who understood the model were able to explain how its use could improve employee motivation.

The three nine-mark questions attracted some good responses. It was pleasing to see the majority of students make effective use of the material included in the case studies.

Question Eight

Good answers to this question used the information in the case to explain how the motivational needs of the team employed by Ailsa Craig influenced her choice of leadership style. Nearly half of students were able to do this to a greater or lesser extent. Those performing less well tended to focus on just the employees' motivational needs or Ailsa's leadership style and could not therefore link the two together. Other students drifted into a discussion of the factors that motivate employees with little or no reference to the case. It is essential that students answer the **exact** question that is asked.

Question Nine

Around 30% of the students were able to recognise that the change in the organisational structure at Gigha Ltd might have negative as well as positive consequences and to use the material in the case study to support their arguments. Others focussed on just the positive aspects arising from, for example, the reduction in the number of levels of hierarchy. A minority analysed the effects of this change on the general performance of the company, rather than communication as requested by the question.

Question Ten

Although there were a good number of decent responses to this question, too many students were unable to distinguish between the roles of a manager and a leader and apply this knowledge to the scenario. Conversely, a minority of students merely explained the difference in the roles of leaders and managers and made no reference to the material in the case study. The best responses demonstrated thorough but concise subject knowledge and related their arguments to the circumstances of Miller plc.

Section B

Question Eleven

This question produced responses of varying quality. A small minority of students mismanaged their time and were unable to attempt to answer this question. This question carries one-third of the total marks available for the paper.

A common weakness was to attempt to make too many points and students did not allow themselves time to develop them fully. As a result the points tended to be brief and often descriptive. A better approach would have been to select a small number of the 'best' arguments and to develop them as fully as possible.

Other students only answered a part of the question. It was quite common for students to argue quite cogently on the benefits of empowerment without relating this to its potential to overcome resistance to change. A small group of students looked at factors that might reduce resistance to change without considering empowerment.

The highest quality answers developed arguments using the case study that analysed whether or not Jack's use of empowerment might overcome resistance to change amongst Tome Ltd's employees. Their responses included a clear judgement on whether this might be the case and the reasons for this judgement. This required students to spend a few minutes considering the demands of the question and deciding the best way to tackle it. Planning is an effective use of time in responding to these high-tariff questions.

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.

[UMS conversion calculator](#)