Cambridge Assessment International Education

Specimen Paper Answers – Paper 1

Cambridge International AS & A Level Business 9609

For examination from 2023

Cambridge Pathway

Contents

Introduction

These specimen answers have been produced by Cambridge ahead of the examination in 2023 to exemplify standards (high) for those teaching Cambridge International AS & A Level Business 9609. We have selected questions from Specimen Paper 1, Questions 4, 6(a) and 6(b).

The marks given are for guidance only and are accompanied by a brief commentary explaining the strengths and weaknesses of the answers. Comments are given to indicate where and why marks were awarded, and how additional marks could be obtained. There is also a list of common mistakes and guidance for candidates for each question.

The specimen materials are available to download from the School Support Hub.

2023 Specimen Paper 01

2023 Specimen Paper Mark Scheme 01

Past exam resources and other teaching and learning resources are available from the School Support Hub

Details of the assessment

Paper 1 Business Concepts 1

Written paper, 1 hour 15 minutes, 40 marks

Section A: four short answer questions. There are two parts to the first three questions.

Section B: one essay from a choice of two. There are two parts to each essay.

Questions are based on the AS Level subject content.

Externally assessed

40% of the AS Level

20% of the A Level

Assessment objectives

AO1 Knowledge and understanding
Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of business concepts, terms and theories.

AO2 Application
Apply knowledge and understanding of business concepts, terms and theories to problems and issues in a variety of familiar and unfamiliar business situations and contexts.

AO3 Analysis
Analyse business problems, issues and situations by:
• using appropriate methods and techniques to make sense of qualitative and quantitative business information
• searching for causes, impact and consequences
• distinguishing between factual evidence and opinion or value judgement
• drawing valid inferences and making valid generalisations.

AO4 Evaluation
Evaluate evidence in order to make reasoned judgements, present substantiated conclusions and, where appropriate, make recommendations for action and implementation.

Assessment objectives as a percentage of Paper 1

AO1 Knowledge and understanding	35%
AO2 Application	30%
AO3 Analysis	20%
AO4 Evaluation	15%

Question 4

Analyse **one** way in which ethics may influence the activities of a business.

Specimen answer

Ethics in business is defined as a system of moral principles that govern the behaviour, decisions and activities of business organisations so that they only do what they consider to be morally right and correct.

There are many ways in which ethics may influence the activities of a business. One way is the way a business treats its employees. A business committed to ethical business activities will likely use resources to ensure there is a supportive work environment where principles of diversity and equality are followed in order to prevent discrimination and alienation. These businesses may well spend more than other businesses on activities to build a high level of employee morale and welfare. Such policies are viewed as 'the right thing to do'. Ethics may also influence and affect the treatment of employees external to a particular business. This may result in additional costs for an ethical business.

Total marks awarded = 4 out of 5

Examiner comment

The mark for knowledge and understanding (AO1) is awarded for an accurate definition of business ethics. (1 out of 1 mark awarded.)

The answer then clearly applies (AO2) the concept of ethics to a relevant business situation. (2 out of 2 marks awarded.) The approach in this answer is to reference private sector businesses. Equally acceptable are examples of ethical choices that may confront 'not for profit', public sector, or social enterprise businesses.

This 5-mark question in Section A of the paper requires analysis (AO3) for which 2 marks can be awarded. This answer analyses how ethics may influence the way a business treats its own employees. The analysis refers to the impact of ethical activity on employees external to a business but does not develop this analytical point. This results in just 1 of the 2 marks for AO3 being awarded for limited rather than developed analysis. Other approaches could focus on the impact of ethical business activity on different stakeholders such as suppliers, customers, governments and the community.

Common errors and general guidance for candidates

Some candidates might be tempted to put in a conclusion to this answer, but one is not required in order to be awarded the full 5 marks.

As analysis (AO3) is a new requirement for this 5-mark question, candidates should avoid too much emphasis on the (AO1) and (AO2) content and leave room for analytical comment.

Question 6(a)

Analyse **two** possible disadvantages to a business of using performance-related pay to motivate its employees.

Specimen answer

Performance-related pay is an employee payment system that rewards an individual or team according to how well they perform, and performance is measured against pre-agreed criteria or objectives. Performance-related pay is mainly associated with manufacturing businesses although businesses in the service sector may also use this method of employee payment. Performance-related pay may in some businesses be limited to payments to those who have performed exceptionally.

Performance-related pay can produce unhealthy work environments. It can promote conflict within a business as unhealthy competition for reward develops. It can result in employees being put under excessive pressure and stress as more and more effort is demanded from them. Employees may focus only on their own individual opportunities to gain rewards. Performance-related pay systems can also result in favouritism or discrimination.

Performance-related pay systems are often difficult to plan and implement and can lead to poor quality performance as employees focus on the amount of output rather than on the quality of output. It is also often difficult to measure 'performance' adequately, especially in a service business. A performance-related payment system that is not carefully planned and implemented can lead to subjective and unfair assessments of the performance of employees. This can lead to low morale and low motivation among employees.

Total marks awarded = 7 out of 8

Examiner comment

This answer clearly defines the concept of performance-related pay in the first paragraph and is awarded 2 out of 2 marks for AO1 (Knowledge and understanding).

The answer then applies the concept of performance related pay to different relevant business organisation contexts and 2 out of 2 available AO2 marks are awarded.

The (AO1) and (AO2) content provides a sound foundation for analysis of possible disadvantages.

Paragraphs two and three of this answer are awarded 3 out of 4 (AO3) marks for analysis of two groups of disadvantages. The analysis mark of 3 indicates that the balance between knowledge and analysis could have been improved with some more developed analysis.

Common errors and general guidance for candidates

It is important to note that AO3 marks account for 50% (4 marks) of the 8 marks available for this question. Some candidates may spend too much time setting out detailed information and explanations of business concepts with inadequate analytical comment.

Question 6(b)

The most important role of human resources management (HRM) in a fast food restaurant is to maintain a high level of morale and welfare.

Evaluate this view.

Specimen answer

The role of human resource management (HRM) in a business is to carry out employee policies such as recruitment, selection, and training so that there is a high level of morale and welfare and the objectives of the business are achieved.

Fast food restaurants, such as McDonalds and Kentucky Fried Chicken need effective HRM roles and functions to build and maintain distinctive and attractive places to eat. These restaurants tend to be staffed by young part-time employees and the service given is fast. These work environments require both teamwork and compliance with highly regulated production systems. The role of HRM in these restaurants is to continually recruit and train their employees to give a level of customer service that is expected and required by customers and the business.

For a national or international group of fast food restaurants, such as McDonalds and Kentucky Fried Chicken, the maintenance of a high level of employee morale and welfare is important. If HRM uses resources to create positive work environments employees may feel valued. In my view, this concern for high levels of morale and welfare is not the most important role for HRM.

Many businesses also spend a lot of HRM resources on training and development programmes. This money is spent to give employees the skills needed to work productively in teams. The training of staff is a very important role for HRM but in my view is not the most important role.

In my view recruitment and selection of appropriate employees is most important for the success of every business. It is important that the right people with the right attitude are recruited at the right time and placed. Hiring and retaining the right employees is critical to the success of all businesses. Maintaining a high level of employee morale and welfare can only be achieved if those employees are the right kind of employees for that business.

Total marks awarded = 10 out of 12

Examiner comment

It is very important that a correct balance of content between the AO mark allocations is achieved. This 12-mark question allocates 2 marks for each of the (AO1), (AO2) and (AO3) skills and 6 marks for the skill of evaluation (AO4).

This answer seeks to establish a good balance between the AO skill content and presents a substantial evaluative response to the question asked.

The first paragraph (AO1) presents sound knowledge and understanding of HRM roles in businesses. The initial explanation of some HRM roles includes a useful reference to employee morale and welfare – a significant part of the question.

The second paragraph (AO2) gives a discussion of relevant fast food restaurant business contexts including a specific context application to McDonalds and KFC. This provides a relevant business context and a useful framework for the analysis.

The final three paragraphs present analysis of the impact of three HRM roles on employee and business performance (AO3). Also presented in these paragraphs is an explicit set of evaluative comments that justify a Level 3 mark of four marks (AO4).

Judgements are made together with arguments in support of those judgements. But these developed evaluative comments are very general and lack the specific context given earlier in this response. This candidate is awarded 4 out of the 6 marks available for the AO4 skill of evaluation. This response gives strong evaluative comment, not just a summary conclusion. The extra 2 marks for evaluation would have been awarded if the candidate had related the evaluation directly to the context of a fast food restaurant.

There are alternative ways of producing a strong evaluation section. The evaluative approach in this essay could, for example, be replaced with a developed judgement and conclusion that focuses on just one HRM factor. The single factor could have been the concern for customer care, or the training and development of employees, or indeed agreement with the view expressed in the question relating to employee welfare and morale. What is important is that an explicit judgement is made and substantiated.

Common errors and general guidance for candidates

Candidates do not always leave enough time or room to produce a substantial evaluative section. This may result in an essay becoming unbalanced with the (AO4) skills section making only a marginal contribution to this 12-mark question.

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