



LEVEL 3 CERTIFICATE

APPLIED BUSINESS

ABSU: ABS2, ABS5, ABS6, ABS7 and ABS8
Report on the Examination

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General comments

The vast majority of centres applied the assessment standards consistently and accurately. It was a joy to moderate many genuinely applied portfolios of evidence across ABS2, ABS5, ABS6, ABS7 and ABS8. However, some centres applied the standards inconsistently and/or failed to grasp key aspects of the following standards:

- Pass criteria require students to demonstrate that they understand the theory covered by each criterion **and** can apply this understanding in context. Assessors can annotate this as **TC** ie T (theory) and C (context)
- Merit criteria require students to demonstrate at least **one** chain of argument, **in context**, for the criterion they are attempting. Assessors can annotate this as **COA** (chain of argument)
- Distinction criteria:
 - These require students to demonstrate a supported judgment, based on a COA in context, for the criterion they are attempting. Assessors can annotate this as **SJ** (supported judgment)
 - Some distinction criteria require evaluation. This is the case for **all** distinction criteria in ABS2 and **some** distinction criteria in extended certificate units (eg D4 in ABS5)
 - For evaluation to be demonstrated, in a criterion, at least two supported judgments must have been successfully made and these must then be used to make a weighted evaluation where the relative strength of each judgment, **in relation to the issue being evaluated**, is assessed. Assessors can annotate this as **EVAL**

Assessor annotation has improved but too many centres limit annotation to ticking evidence. **At the very least, the annotation indicated above must be used.**

Successful students demonstrated an admirable ability to carry out focussed research, analyse the collated information and use their findings to address the challenges set by each unit. Less successful students could demonstrate an ability to analyse in context, but struggled judge the significance of their findings. The least successful students could demonstrate understanding of key concepts but struggled to apply these in context.

Please note that AQA has examples of work which centres can use for establishing standards. These will always be located in the secure materials section of AQA's website and are generally referred to as **TOLS** materials ie **T**eacher **O**nLine **S**tandardisation materials.

The following comments highlight key areas of misunderstanding across each unit's criteria. Centres are reminded that their allocated non-examined assessment (NEA) advisor can provide guidance in relation to the meaning of each criterion and the tasks that could be set to support achievement.

ABS2

The majority of centres continue to use the **sample** assignment task on AQA's website. It is hoped that centres might start to move away from the Merlin Entertainments context in the future. The same tasks could be used but a new context set. Often a local context helps students to make sense of the unit's assessment requirements. As long as this context involves a business with multiple levels of staff skills/responsibilities within its organisational structure, most local businesses will suffice. Centres can contact their NEA advisor if in doubt.

Criteria commonly misinterpreted:

- P2 where students **must** describe the interests of stakeholders **in context**. Too often, students are describing generic interests and not those of the business's **specific** stakeholders
- P3/M2 where students continue to avoid referencing the organisational **structure** of the business ie how the functional activities are organised means how they are arranged within the structure of the business
- M3 where students continue to analyse the process of recruitment rather than, as required, the **outcomes** of recruitment ie has the business recruited the right staff?
- D4 where students **must** evaluate using **evidence** of how the policies **have improved** the competitive position of the business ie what **did** happen?
- P10/M9 where the distinct sets of data collected by students were difficult to identify ie we must have **four** different sets, referencing at least **two** of the three external environment forces, and these **must** be capable of being verified by moderators eg by weblinks or inclusion of the data in the evidence

ABS5

Most centres made good use of the evidence templates available on AQA's website. Some centres' students produced excessive volumes of evidence. The volume could often be reduced by sticking to the evidence templates. However, it was generally the case that students used the templates to help them investigate the meaning of their business proposal.

Centres are reminded that this unit does **not** require the production of a business **plan**. The purpose of the unit is to assess the ability of students to carry out a significant piece of research and analysis in the context of developing a business **proposal**. The quality of thinking is the key to success. Communicating ideas to **funding providers** offers students an opportunity to demonstrate their ability to get ideas across to others and to reflect on feedback. It is a practical unit and should be approached in this way.

Criteria commonly misinterpreted:

- M2 where students misinterpreted the meaning of 'interesting' in de Bono's PMI tool. The I in PMI is asking students to think laterally. It is where the thinker is being asked to list interesting points about their proposal. It is **not** where the thinker lists why customers would be interested in the product. It is **not** where the thinker repeats something from the plus or minus column.
- M4 where students avoid the vision and aims of the business and focus exclusively on potential viability. All three must be considered.

- M6 where students mistakenly focussed on communication materials targeting customers rather than funding providers. The purpose of the P7/M6/D4 assessment chain is to get students to reflect on how they will communicate with their **funding providers**
- D4 where **evaluation** is required and where too many students focussed on supported judgments alone

ABS6

More students tackled ABS6 in this assessment session. All centres understood the challenge and used the templates to help their students investigate the potential use of e-Business applications within their ABS5 business proposal. Centres are reminded that, as in all Applied Business internally assessed units, ABS6 is a **practical** unit and should be tackled in this way. Any new centres opting for this unit should contact their NEA adviser to confirm a practical and focussed approach.

No criteria were fundamentally misinterpreted, but the focus on **evaluation** was sometimes forgotten for criteria D3 and D5. In addition, some centres' students tended to generalise on stakeholder approval in M6. For this criterion, **actual** local stakeholders must be used.

ABS7

This unit concerns itself, primarily, with teamworking. It is a **very** practical unit focussed on event management. Successful students understood the purpose of their event and evidently worked in a team. Less successful students forgot about the purpose of the event and/or the relevance of teamworking.

ABS7 is possibly the most challenging unit to integrate with ABS5. Nevertheless, it **must** be integrated with each student's business proposal. This does not mean that the 'tail wags the dog' but it does mean that students complete PO4 in the same way that ABS6 and ABS8 students complete PO4 ie by recommending and justifying adjustments to their business proposals. Each centre's NEA adviser can offer support in relation to this integration.

Criteria commonly misinterpreted:

- P3 must be completed and was sometimes difficult to locate in students' portfolios
- P4/M3/D2 assessment chain where the purpose and scope of research was sometimes unclear in students' portfolios, in particular the evidence often lacked focus on competitor activities
- P5/M4 where students sometimes struggled to focus on the event characteristics, in particular the primary purpose of the event
- M5/D3 where students who struggled to define the primary purpose of the event then found it difficult to explain or **evaluate** the event plan's ability to achieve its primary purpose
- P8/M7/D5 assessment chain where the lack of focus on teamworking, observed by moderators through a lack of evidence, made achieving M7 and D5 quite difficult. The

evidence needs to be more than a list of activities and should focus more on the actuality of the event delivery and the contributions made by team members

ABS8

Most centres continue to use this optional unit. Many students approached the unit in a practical way, making effective use of evidence templates and using their investigation to think more deeply about their customer value propositions and how to communicate this to their target market.

PO1 continues to take up more evidence space than is required. Centres are reminded that this performance outcome is designed to help students appreciate the meaning and use of marketing communications used by small business. The main focus should be on PO2, PO3 and PO4 ie marketing communications in relation to each student's ABS5 business proposal.

Criteria commonly misinterpreted:

- P1/P2 where students conflated the meaning of communication content (the message) and communications channels (the delivery). P1 should focus on content. P2 should focus on channels.
- P5/M4 where students often forgot to consider the marketing communication messages used by competitors
- D3 where students failed to **evaluate** the strategy's ability to gain customer loyalty and restricted themselves to supported judgments
- D5 where students failed to **evaluate** the coherence of the marketing communications mix and restricted themselves to supported judgments
- P10/M9/D6 assessment chain where the focus on each student's ABS5 business proposal was sometimes lacking. All evidence **must** link back to each student's ABS5 business proposal

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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