



APPLIED GENERAL **APPLIED BUSINESS**

ABS4 Unit 4 Managing and Leading People
Report on the Examination

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General Comments

Once again over the past year students have faced many challenges leading up to this exam. Students should be commended for the knowledge and skills they demonstrated throughout the exam paper. Students carefully read the information and were able to select and use relevant theories. Time was not an issue as nearly all students completed the paper. Most students did not use extra pages for the 3-mark questions, and this helped them to allocate their time efficiently across the whole exam paper.

For 3-mark questions students should define the emboldened term and although most students did this for question 5, some students struggled to do this for questions six and seven. Although the 9-mark questions were answered well, there were students who showed a knowledge of the emboldened terms and used the information provided but did not link these together to provide an analytical response. The lack of linking the information to theory was particularly the case for question 9. For the 20-mark question some students demonstrated evaluative skills but these tended to be one sided. For the most part students argued the organisational change could not be implemented due to financial constraints. A balanced argument is required for full marks.

Multiple Choice Questions

Questions One, Two and Three

It was pleasing to see a large number of students understanding types of change, together with a manager's role and a leader's role.

Question Four

This question was based around pairs of statements about the Tannenbaum and Schmidt leadership continuum, however most students did not demonstrate an understanding of this.

Question Five

Students answered this question well recognising that a leadership style that relies on authority was one where the manager takes most of the decisions, or this understanding was implicit within the students' answers. Most students suggested that employees would be demotivated and hence this leadership style would not be suitable. Some students lost out on the context mark as they rewrote the term 'highly skilled', rather than applying this to the question.

Question Six

A large number of students did not understand that referent power arose from the leader's character traits, charisma or image etc so could not be awarded marks for this question. A small number of students thought referent power related to the skills of the leader. Some students did not set their answer in the context of a small business and could not get all three marks. Examples of context that students did offer were a small number of employees or Paul would know all of his employees.

Question Seven

There was a particular lack of understanding shown for the term 'strategic change'. Only a small number of students referred to strategic change relating to the goals or purpose of the business. A number of students did not refer to strategic change at all within their answer, but instead just

described poor communication within the business. Unfortunately these students could not be awarded marks for this question as no understanding of strategic change was shown.

Question Eight

It was pleasing to see a high number of students demonstrated an understanding of force field analysis as a business tool to make a decision by looking at the balance of forces. In this case that the resisting forces outweighed the driving forces. Students who obtained full marks fully addressed the question with a weighted decision supported by both driving and resisting forces.

Students who used the information to describe the driving and resisting forces but without considering the balance of these forces were awarded L2.

Some students described force field analysis in their introductory paragraph but then did not apply these forces to the rest of their answer, but instead rewrote the case study information. A small number of students did not show an understanding of force field analysis, however they did demonstrate an understanding of the external environment, eg income, technology. This meant that although these students may not have understood force field analysis forces or balance, they could, where appropriate, access L1 marks.

Question Nine

Students reaching L3 linked their chosen motivation method(s) to a motivational theory of their choice. Maslow and Herzberg were the most popular motivational theories. Some students also analysed Taylor, Locke and Vroom motivational theories. Of the students awarded L3 most analysed two motivation methods with their theory to obtain a higher L3 mark. Most students analysed the same motivational theory for both financial and non-financial methods, some analysed a different motivational theory for each. Either of these approaches allowed students to reach L3.

Nearly all students described at least one method of motivation and a large number described both methods of motivation in context for L2. There were a number of students who described a motivational theory in their introduction then used the information to describe two methods of motivation. However, there was no link between these methods and their chosen theory to allow a move to L3.

A small number of students did not use the information but instead described generic methods of motivation or motivational theory. Some students focused on why employees were demotivated and did not offer any methods to motivate employees, hence could only be awarded L1 marks.

Question Ten

At L3 students analysed the benefits of moving to the matrix organisational structure and linked these to organisational targets. These students analysed how the matrix organisational structure created cross-functional teams with particular scientific skill sets to solve customer needs, to motivate employees and/or to attract customers.

To reach L2 students used the information to describe why a hierarchical organisational structure was less appropriate and/or why a matrix organisational structure was more appropriate for Bellis Ltd's highly skilled employees. At L2 students appreciated that the matrix organisational structure allowed for cross-functional teams to work on customer projects and also improved decision

making and communication. However, some students just focused on the negatives of the hierarchical organisational structure and did not answer the question to say why the use of a matrix organisational structure might help Bellis Ltd to meet its organisational performance targets, thus were unable to access L3 marks.

A number of students showed a generic understanding of organisational structure, mostly a hierarchical organisational structure, and were able to access some L1 marks. A small number of students did not attempt this question.

Question Eleven

For L5 students were expected to address the question fully and make a supported judgement on the extent to which empowerment would overcome the financial constraints to successfully implement organisational change. At this level most students offered an unbalanced response arguing that insufficient finance to provide training etc would prevent the implementation of Willow's proposals. However, it was lovely to see a few students also evaluated the positive effect of empowerment, thereby providing a balanced argument and could be awarded top marks.

To achieve L4 students needed to link either empowerment and/or the financial constraints to the company's ability to implement the proposed organisational change. Students analysed:

- the benefits of empowerment
- how employees wanted more of a say in decision making and interesting jobs
- how working in teams could motivate employees, improve staff retention rates; leading to an increase in output, better designed bikes, eliminating faults and improved delivery time

all of which supported Willow's plans. However, some students recognised that the workers lacked skills and didn't want empowerment but instead wanted a pay rise and this was not on offer with Willow's plan. Hence there was resistance to change from the employees. Students also analysed the financial constraints that with limited funds from declining profits the company could not raise the necessary £1.5m to finance training and redundancy payments. Without training, faults would continue and, combined with the closure of the factory, orders would be cancelled thereby threatening the whole organisational change. If a judgement was offered, it was unsupported along the lines of the plans would or would not work.

Most students reached L3 as they recognised empowerment would bring the benefit of motivating employees as their jobs would be less repetitive. Some students also explained how bikes would be better designed and faults reduced. On the financial side some students explained how the lack of finance meant training could not be carried out to provide workers with the necessary skills to make changes to the production line. At this level the benefits and constraints were explained but not analysed and linked to the proposed organisational change in the case study. There were a small minority of students who used ADKAR however, this did not answer the question thereby limiting most of these students to a L3 at most by including a benefit arising from empowerment.

Students who described empowerment and/or constraints in the context of the case study were awarded L2. Most common descriptions were that Willow planned to empower employees to work in teams, they would make decisions on how to design the bikes, or profits were very low. Students who simply demonstrated a generic understanding of empowerment and/or financial constraints without any reference to the case study achieved L1.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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