



APPLIED GENERAL L3

APPLIED BUSINESS

ABS/U (externally moderated units 2, 5, 6, 7 and 8)
Report on the Examination

1830
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General comments

Many centres applied the assessment standards consistently and accurately. When centres faced problems, it was due to one or more of the following factors:

- lack of annotation, either within the body of work or in the form of summary statements, so that the ability to make assessment decisions was compromised
- misinterpretation of assessment requirements affecting all students within the sample
- difficulties in understanding the quality of evidence required for pass, merit and distinction criteria
- inconsistent assessment across the sample with, for example, merit criteria being accurately awarded for some students but not given for other students when the same key qualities were evident

Annotation, against evidence demonstrating the above qualities, does not have to be extensive. It does, however, need to be present. The following abbreviations can be used:

- **C&T** – ‘Context and Theory’ demonstrated for the pass criterion
- **CoA** – ‘Chain of Argument’ demonstrated for the merit criterion
- **Focus** – addressing the requirements of any criterion but often useful for merit and distinction criteria
- **SJ** – ‘Supported Judgment’ evidenced for the distinction criterion
- **Eval** – ‘Evaluation’ evidenced where the distinction criterion requires this.

Successful centres often made effective use of annotation. It helped assessors be consistent with their assessment decisions. It meant that assessors could efficiently and accurately apply assessment qualities. In short, accurate annotation goes a long way to ensuring a successful moderation.

Regarding the misinterpretation of assessment requirements, if centres are uncertain about the meaning of criteria, their allocated portfolio adviser will provide clarification. Centres are encouraged to use the support offered by their adviser – it is free and often helps to avoid potential problems.

Regarding the quality standards, the January 2022 report listed them. Previous reports, for example June 2019, listed these qualities. They are:

- **Pass** – ability to demonstrate required understanding in context
- **Merit** – ability to construct chains of argument, in context, which focus on the criteria
- **Distinction** – ability to use evidence and analysis to offer supported judgments. In the case of criteria requiring evaluation, the judgments are then weighted ie relative strengths of contrasting judgments are considered.

Please reference the general comments section of the June 2019 report for additional support. Finally, it was pleasing to see evidence of focussed research from successful students. Less successful students conducted limited research and, sometimes, padded out their evidence with speculation and/or theoretical detail. This is an applied qualification – success comes through investigating the real world.

ABS2

Successful students were clear about the unit’s requirements and engaged with the investigation. Although the example assignment - focussing on Merlin Entertainments - can still be used, students might be more engaged if they were allowed to investigate local businesses. The choice is a difficult one, yet the ability to visit the business investigated could offer new avenues of research.

Less successful students conducted insufficient research and struggled to go beyond achieving the merit criteria. With a lack of research, it was often impossible for them to offer up the supported judgements needed by the distinction criteria.

The least successful students barely engaged with the business investigated and restricted themselves to offering limited application sufficient to evidence the pass criteria.

Please refer to the June 2019 report for common misinterpretations. These were evident again, although D4 less so ie focus was on how management policies **have** improved the competitive position of the business.

Centres are reminded that P3/M2 relates to **organisational structure** and not atomistic functional areas.

ABS5

Successful students fully engaged with the opportunity to investigate their own business proposals. Often a pleasure to read, the evidence stuck to the criteria and was consistently backed by focussed research and analysis within PO2. PO3 saw these students considering how best to communicate with funding providers and they were fully aware of the pros and cons of their proposals. Finally, in PO4, they understood the specification content and stuck to the requirements of the criteria. Their recommended improvements were considered and supported by research. Less successful students struggled to tackle the distinction criteria, which require reflection and an ability to use supported judgements.

The least successful students contented themselves with achieving the pass criteria or could not construct chains of argument, in context, when tackling the higher criteria.

Please refer to the June 2019 report for common misinterpretations. However, M2 presents less of an issue than it did in 2019. Unfortunately, PO3 continues to present difficulties for some centres: it is about communicating with funding providers and **not** the target market. D4 is evaluative and **must** contain opposing supported judgments, which are then used to make an evaluation of the materials communicating the business proposal. In addition, the questions asked for D5 **must** relate to the coherence of the proposal.

ABS6

As in 2019, students engaged with this unit and produced focussed evidence. Successful students were realistic in their approach and considered practical e-Business applications within PO3. A strong link to their ABS5 proposal was evidenced and helped them to successfully tackle the criteria within PO4.

Less successful students considered unrealistic applications and/or struggled to make sense of their e-Business external environment.

The least successful students, as in all the units, either restricted themselves to the pass criteria or failed to demonstrate an ability to construct chains of argument in context. This was sometimes due to lack of research (eg M3 and M4) but was also a consequence of failing to grasp concepts eg customer value proposition in M5.

D3 and D5 continue to be a problem during moderation – they are both **evaluative** and require at least two contrasting supported judgements feeding into a considered evaluation.

In addition, centres should ensure that obvious income streams are not ignored within the P5 and P6 chains ie sales of goods and services! Sometimes advertising was the main form of revenue, which was not the case considering their business proposals.

ABS7

Please refer to the comments made in the June 2019 report. The issues remain ie this unit is about team work within an **actual** event carried out by students working in small groups. Successful students carried out activities (often based within their school/college) requiring organisation and teamwork eg charity events.

Less successful students struggled to consider planning, leadership and event delivery issues.

They could consider their own performance in isolation, but not in relation to the team and its characteristics. They were often unclear about the event plan and its ability to achieve its primary purpose.

The least successful students had little idea of the event plan and its implementation. They could demonstrate many of the pass criteria, collecting and collating information, but struggled to participate in the team activities.

The same criteria continue to be 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 - 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 on the event delivery and the contributions made by team members.

ABS8

This continues to be the most popular optional unit.

Successful students used it as an opportunity to understand the motivations of their ABS5 target market and how best to communicate with them. Some excellent marketing communications strategies and mixes were developed, with creative use of available channels to communicate effective messages evidenced.

Less successful students never really got to grips with the motivations of their target markets and/or the idea of customer loyalty. This lack of focus restricted outcomes as it made it difficult to access the distinction criteria.

The least successful students failed to conduct the depth of research required to analyse their marketing communication strategy. They failed to consider target market approval of their draft communications material and often struggled to consider the metrics used to monitor the outcomes of their marketing communications.

Common misinterpretations were, thankfully, far fewer compared with 2019. However, the following remains:

- P5/M4 where students often forgot to consider the marketing communication messages used by competitors

The focus of this chain is the communication messages used by competitors – students' own messages do not exist in isolation, and they should be encouraged to consider a wide variety of messages used by their potential competitors. This activity will also help to support PO3 as ideas may well be generated through it.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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