

GCSE (9–1)

Examiners' report

BUSINESS

J204

For first teaching in 2017

J204/01 Autumn 2020 series

Introduction

Our examiners' reports are produced to offer constructive feedback on candidates' performance in the examinations. They provide useful guidance for future candidates.



Reports for the Autumn 2020 series will provide a broad commentary about candidate performance, with the aim for them to be useful future teaching tools. As an exception for this series they will not contain any questions from the exam paper nor examples of candidate responses.

The reports will include a general commentary on candidates' performance, identify technical aspects examined in the questions and highlight good performance and where performance could be improved. The reports will also explain aspects which caused difficulty and why the difficulties arose, whether through a lack of knowledge, poor examination technique, or any other identifiable and explainable reason.

A full copy of the exam paper and the mark scheme can be downloaded from OCR.

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Paper 1 series overview

Paper 1 focuses on business activity, marketing and people. The structure of the paper mirrors that of the previous live series and the practice paper made available by OCR on Interchange. Candidates who used these resources as revision aids should have been well prepared for this examination.


<i>Candidates who did well on this paper generally did the following:</i>	<i>Candidates who did less well on this paper generally did the following:</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> gave comparative responses to questions requiring a recommendation expressed their decision clearly when asked to choose between courses of action used the data provided in Text 3 to calculate relevant sums which reinforced their response to Q18d. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> left one or more multiple choice questions blank answered questions generically rather than using the Texts provided to give applied answers did not provide a chain of argument when answering questions requiring analysis.

Full preparation for this exam includes:

- practice at answering multiple choice questions
- the ability to apply understanding to the contexts given in Texts 1 – 3
- the development of analytical skills
- the development of evaluative skills
- the use of data calculations to support arguments (especially important when answering the final question on this paper).

Section A

Section A comprised 15 multiple choice questions and provided opportunity for candidates to settle into the examination. Candidates appeared to have no difficulty using the answer boxes in this section and, where a mistake was made, generally made their new answer obvious. However, a few candidates lost marks by leaving an MCQ question entirely blank. This is poor examination technique. Candidates should be encouraged to indicate a response to all 15 questions.

	OCR support	<p>We have produced lots of practice multiple choice questions for centres to use. These can be accessed using the link https://www.ocr.org.uk/qualifications/gcse/business-j204-from-2017/planning-and-teaching/ and selecting 'Teaching activities'. The resource organises the practice multiple choice questions by topic, so that it can be used appropriately throughout the programme of study.</p>
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Section B

Section B presents candidates with three texts. The questions in this section require the demonstration of five different skills: Knowledge, Understanding, Application, Analysis and Evaluation.

Candidates should make careful note of the command word in the question e.g. identify, explain, analyse, recommend, etc and answer accordingly. The command word used in the question links directly to the skill (or skills) which the question is assessing. As such, each question is an instruction to a candidate to demonstrate the appropriate skill(s) to unlock the full range of marks available for each question.

Some questions required a portfolio of skills to be demonstrated. For example, the nine-mark question (Question 18d) requires all five skills to be demonstrated, reflecting the high number of marks available. However, most questions are more targeted, allowing candidates to focus on a smaller number of skills. For example, Question 17f used the command word 'analyse' and required candidates to demonstrate understating of the benefit of using self-employed workers, application to EDF and one piece of analysis i.e. the impact on the business of the identified benefit.

The skill that candidates most need to improve on is application i.e. to show understanding by applying their knowledge to the given text. As a general rule-of-thumb, if a question uses the name of a business or a stakeholder, then some level of application to that business or stakeholder is required. For example, Question 16a required application, whereas Question 16b did not.

	Misconception	Application is not about what could be applicable to any business, but what is actually applicable to the specific scenario given in the text.
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Question 18d, the only nine-mark question on this paper, includes the testing of candidate ability to use numerical data. Two marks were reserved for this purpose (application marks). For an award of nine out of nine, candidates are required to show that they have used (rather than quoted) the numerical data given – in this case by calculating pertinent information from the historic sales revenue and profit figures and recruitment costings given.

Each of Questions 16 – 18 contain at least one 'analyse' question and at least one 'evaluate'/'discuss'/'recommend' question.

What is analysis?

Analysis requires candidates to present a logical chain of reasoning. The chain of reasoning should begin with an appropriate point relating to the question and end with at least one impact of this particular point on the business (or occasionally, depending on the wording of the question, an impact on the stakeholders of a business).

The maximum tariff for analysis on any question on this paper is two marks. Therefore, a maximum of two analytical points (one from each side of the argument) are needed to achieve the maximum marks awardable for this skill. It should be noted however, as per the wording of the specification, that 'discuss'/'evaluate'/'recommend' questions also encompass the testing of analytical skill. Candidates need to demonstrate their ability to analyse on 'analyse' and 'discuss'/'evaluate'/'recommend' questions.

What is evaluation?

Evaluation requires a supported judgement to be made. The question wording may use 'discuss', 'evaluate' or 'recommend' – all of these require a justified, reasoned, argument to be put forward.

Each time the skill of evaluation is rewarded on this paper it has a tariff of three marks.

Candidates should be encouraged to reach decisions and give reasoned justification to support their argument using contextual information. While a valid justification that applies to most businesses would achieve two of the available three evaluation marks, a response which argues using the particular circumstances of the business in the text, will be given the full three marks that are available.

Once again, the range of questions presented on the paper gave candidates of all abilities the opportunity to demonstrate their understanding. Most of the scripts showed that the candidate had, at least, attempted to answer all the questions set, with a consequent very low question omit rate across the paper (except for Question 17f). The questions addressed a wide range of topics taken from the specification and were a true test of a candidate's ability to apply their knowledge and understanding of business. The higher tariff, seven- and nine-mark questions, gave high ability candidates the opportunity to fully demonstrate their understanding using contextual application, analysis and evaluation; and several did so.

There was little evidence that candidates struggled for time in this examination and almost all candidates tried the last question.

Comments on responses by question type

Multiple choice questions

Candidates generally answered this section well. Only Questions 7, 11 and 15 seemed to cause issues.

Question 7 required the calculation of percentage change. The most common error appearing to be using £15m as the denominator, rather than £12m. The denominator for percentage change should always be the pre-change figure.

Question 11 required candidates to calculate the average span of control. The most popular incorrect answer was C; presumably because candidates had calculated the spans of control of the managers but omitted the span of control of the managing director (five).

Question 15 tested a candidate's ability to problem solve. The seller has limited funds, so responses A and B were inappropriate. Response C would reduce costs, but also motivation. So, response D should be chosen as the correct answer. Wrong responses were fairly evenly dispersed between the three incorrect options, suggesting that candidates had not considered the context of this question.

Level of response questions

The two high tariff questions on the paper (16fii and 18d) were generally well answered.

Question 16fii (seven marks) required candidates to consider whether Superdry should continue to invest in the store re-fit programme. Most candidates made their decision clear (one mark) and gave a valid reason (one extra mark). Those who gave a contextually valid reason gained the full three marks for evaluation. Those candidates who gained higher marks expressed advantages/ disadvantages with application (e.g. makes the stores exciting encouraging customers to visit the store) and followed the chain of argument through the consequence on the business (e.g. greater revenue, higher cashflow, more profit, etc).

Question 18d (9 marks) required candidates to consider whether internal recruitment is the best method for appointing a Marketing Manager for Children's shoes at BFF. The best responses began by stating the meaning of internal recruitment. Stating the meaning of terms in the nine-mark question is good practice, as it can frequently be awarded as knowledge. Candidates then went on to consider the advantages/disadvantages of internal/external recruitment, showing understanding. Those who followed the chain of argument through to consequences on the business gained marks for analysis. Accurate calculations supporting their argument (e.g. internal recruitment was £2000 cheaper than external recruitment) were given application marks. Again, most candidates made their decision clear (one mark) and gave a valid reason (one extra mark). Those who gave a contextually valid reason gain the full three marks for evaluation. Several responses were given the full nine marks on this question.

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