CAMBRIDGE TECHNICALS LEVEL 3 (2016)

Examiners' report

BUSINESS

05834–05837, 05878

Unit 15 January 2024 series

Contents

Introduction

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

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.

Where overall performance on a question/question part was considered good, with no particular areas to highlight, these questions have not been included in the report.

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Unit 15 series overview

This series has seen a slight improvement overall in the quality of responses produced by candidates. A combination of good subject knowledge and good exam technique have helped students achieve slightly higher marks on average. The context of a business selling package tours seems to have been relatively accessible for the majority of candidates, most of whom were able to use relevant evidence to support their answers.

As in previous series, this paper was split into two sections, one focussing on the issues faced by a business before implementing a change, the second focussing on the state of the business following the change. Each section was associated with a different resource – Resource 1 related to Question 1, which assessed knowledge of pre-change issues. Resource 2 related to post change issues which were assessed in Question 2. The first section of the paper included two 16 mark extended response questions, allowing candidates to demonstrate their ability to analyse and evaluate business data. The second section of the paper contained one extended response question. Most candidates were able to answer Question 2 (a) relatively well, but some candidates struggled to fully recognise the demands of Questions 1 (b) and 1 (c). Despite this, most candidates were able to demonstrate knowledge of a range of different aspects of change management, accruing marks steadily throughout the paper.

Candidates who did well on this paper generally:	Candidates who did less well on this paper generally:
- used relevant theory as the basis of essay questions, structuring each paragraph around a different point - used the pre-change Resource 1 and post change Resource 2 material for the appropriate questions - made appropriate analytical comments about the impact of change on OP Tours Ltd, clearly indicating how performance indicators such as profit, cost and revenue will change – for example that they will increase or decrease.	- did not use resource material selectively to support their answer - gave answers that were largely descriptive, without showing the impact of change on a service sector business selling package holidays - demonstrated knowledge of change management theory without linking this to the case study - gave responses that did not directly answer the question set.

Maintaining the correct focus is key to achieving well

Some candidates gave answers that did not necessarily address aspects of change management accurately. Some answers related to the daily operations of the business, or to the marketing of the new products that were being launched as part of the change. In doing so, they did not demonstrate adequate knowledge of change management. It is important to ensure that candidates are familiar with examples and non-examples of answers to change management questions, so they are aware of what they should write and what they should not write.

Question 1 (a)

1   Use **Resource 1**.

(a)   Describe **two** changes in the economy that have driven change at OP Tours Ltd.

1 ....

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2 ....

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                                   [4]

Questions 1 (a), (b) and (c) related to Resource 1, in keeping with previous papers. This approach will also remain consistent in future papers. It is important that candidates are aware of which resource should be used to answer each question. A small minority of candidates used Resource 2 evidence, relating to the changes in Business KPIs to answer Question 1 (a), meaning that they were not able to achieve any marks for this item.

Despite this, Question 1 (a) was generally well answered, with the majority of candidates able to correctly identify economic drivers of change such as changes in exchange rates, interest rates and unemployment. It is important that candidates are aware that questions such as this that assess understanding of drivers of change include not only the factor that has driven change, but also how it has driven change, in this case, an indication of directionality was vital – candidates needed to show that interest rates had **risen,** not just that they were a driver of change.

Misconception

?   A small number of candidates were obviously aware of current economic developments in the real world, and consequently made reference to inflation being high. Unfortunately, while this is true of the real world, answers must relate to the case study provided, so this was not a valid answer to the question.

Question 1 (b)

(b) Evaluate possible impacts of the change on OP Tours Ltd's staff training needs.

[16]

This was the first of three 16 mark questions on this paper. Some candidates found this question relatively challenging. While some candidates were able to identify relevant training needs from the case study and gave specific examples of issues that needed to be addressed for both drivers and office staff at OP Tours, other candidates selected the wrong evidence from the case study, focussing on other HR related issues such as an unwillingness to change terms and conditions of employment, or they gave an answer that was largely or entirely generic, focussing on consequences of undertaking training such as cost to time requirements.

Where candidates did choose the correct focus for their response, they generally managed to accurately analyse the issues created by the training needs arising from the change, such as the cost implications of putting office staff on language courses, or the loss of productivity resulting from taking drivers off the road to teach them about driving on the continent.

While many students attempted to evaluate their answers to this question, picking the impact that they considered most important, many were not able to access the highest mark band as they had only made one analytical comment earlier in the essay. For questions like this, students should be aware that they would normally need to have analysed at least two impacts in order to access the highest mark band. Students should also be aware that, when evaluating, marks would normally be given for selecting the most important impact and rejecting another that was not important.

Use of Resource materials

? Generic answers to essay questions will rarely attract many if any marks. For this question, candidates often wrote paragraphs about issues such as the time required to complete training or the cost associated with training, without linking this to any specific issues facing OP Tours. Answers to these extended writing questions must always draw on the issues highlighted in the case study. A purely generic response will never be acceptable.

Question 1 (c)

(c) The directors of OP Tours Ltd have been advised to create a plan of action to ensure that the change is successful.

Other than activities relating to staff training needs, analyse **two** activities that should be included in the plan of action.

Which of these activities is likely to be the most important for the success of the change? Give reasons for your answer.

[16]

This was the second 16 mark question on this paper. Candidates seemed to find this question particularly challenging, with many struggling to give an accurate answer. A number of responses highlighted training needs that they felt should have been included in an action plan. As the question explicitly states that these issues should not be considered, it was not possible to award any marks for those parts of their responses.

Similarly, there were two common misconceptions in responses. Some candidates wrote about aspects of business activity not directly related to managing change. Common answers included marketing of the new holidays, for example, highlighting the need to advertise the holidays, or operational issues, for example, running the actual coach trips. As these points were not related to change management, they did not answer the question and could not be given marks. The other common misconception was the use of a specific model of change management. Candidates seemed particularly likely to use elements of Kotters model of change management as the basis for their answer. While some such responses linked stages in the model to relevant examples from Resource 1, others simply described stages in the model such as creating wins, and consequently were not given any marks.

Overall, the candidates who did answer this question well, based their answer on a specific issue from the case study such as consulting stakeholders or appointing a project champion. They were then able to gain analysis marks by linking these elements of the plan to specific impacts on the business such as ensuring that the new European trips are successful and thus increasing profits.

Assessment for learning

While practice using past papers is a good way to prepare candidates for this exam, they should also be aware that each series will have its own unique questions. Many candidates used Kotters model of change management in their answer to this question. It is possible that this is because they remembered using that model in a response to a question from the summer 2023 version of this paper. Candidates should be encouraged to read each question carefully and ensure they do not try to repeat answers from previous papers as this is unlikely to lead to success.

Question 2 (a)

2 Use **Resource 2**.

(a) Using the quantitative and qualitative data provided, analyse the current issues that the directors need to address.

Which one of these issues is the most important? Give reasons for your answer.

[16]

This was the final 16 mark question on this paper. As with similar items in previous papers, this question was largely well answered with many candidates gaining 9 or more marks. Candidates generally identified issues that need to be addressed, such as staff having accidents on European roads, or customers being contacted post booking with higher bills, and developed an appropriate analysis based on that point, linking these issues to consequences such as a reduction in the reputation for the business as a result of an increased number of complaints, or an increase in costs as a result of paying penalties for accidents caused by drivers.

Many candidates made good attempts at evaluation but did not gain all of the Mark Band 4 marks for two reasons. While candidates could often justify their choice of one issue as the most important, they tended not to contextualise their answer. For example, by linking their conclusion to the specific products sold by OP Tours (European holidays). Candidates also tended not to reject any of their other points as being less important. For a question such as this, full marks normally require a fully contextualised conclusion that selects one issue and rejects another.

In a minority of cases, candidates used Resource 1 material as the basis for their answer. For example, a number of answers related to the suggestion that workers did not want to change their terms and conditions of employment. Candidates should remember that the majority of questions in this part of the paper can and should only be answered with reference to Resource 2.

Misconception

? This question asked candidates to identify issues that need to be addressed by the business. This implies that there is an issue that is unresolved or something that is not going well and needs to be fixed. On this basis, data points in Resource 2 indicating that the change is going well would not be the basis of a valid answer.

Some candidates made the error of selecting aspects of the data that did not indicate something needing to be addressed. As such, those parts of their answer were not given any marks.

Question 2 (b)

(b) Rishi is experiencing stakeholder inertia and Ryan is experiencing stakeholder fear.
Explain the difference between stakeholder inertia and stakeholder fear.

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.... **[2]**

This question was generally well answered. Most candidates were able to accurately explain the difference between fear and inertia.

In a minority of cases, candidates were not able to get a mark for their explanation of fear, because they simply repeated the wording from the question – e.g. "Ryan is experiencing stakeholder fear because the changes to the business make him feel fear about how the change will affect him." Unfortunately, this type of tautological response cannot be given any marks.

In general, candidates answered this question by contrasting simple definitions of each term – e.g. fear is when you are scared about aspects of the change, but inertia is when you are reluctant to participate in the change.

Assessment for learning

Stakeholder fear and stakeholder inertia are similar concepts and are often related to resistance to change. In this series, candidates often confused these three phenomena, in many cases suggesting that fear and inertia are different types of resistance to change.

In preparation for future exams, candidates should be prepared for questions that might require them to define, compare, contrast, or exemplify all three phenomena. Preparing for this type of question by reading short case studies and identifying examples of each might be particularly useful.

Question 2 (c)

(c) OP Tours Ltd has been accused of having a negative impact on the environment. This is because all of its coaches have diesel engines. The directors have decided to replace some of the diesel coaches with electric coaches. The coach drivers do not agree with this decision.

Identify **two** stages of Lewin's change management theory. For each of these stages, identify **one** action that the directors could take to help manage this change effectively.

Stage 1 ....

Action ....

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Stage 2 ....

Action ....

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[6]

This question was generally well answered with many candidates able to name both stages accurately. Many candidates could also describe suitable activities that might be undertaken as part of each stage.

One unusual characteristic of this question was that the references made to the unfreeze stage needed to draw on issues pre-change – those in Resource 1. This is something that should be borne in mind when preparing for future series – should any questions come up relating to unfreezing in the future, this should relate to Resource 1 data, likewise, descriptions of refreezing should relate to post change data.

Assessment for learning

Many candidates were unable to gain full marks on this question because they did not contextualise their answer. Candidates should always ensure that they make reference to the specific products sold by the case study business, the type of customers they serve or the industry that they operate in within their responses.

Candidates should ensure that they practice contextualising answers in preparation for future assessments. When doing so, they should ensure that they do not repeat any words or phrases from the question in their evaluation, as this would not count as contextualisation.

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