
L3 Certificate

Applied Business

ABS4 (Managing and leading people)
Report on the Examination

January 2018

Version: 1.0

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General comments

The candidates taking this examination showed a number of strengths in their responses to the paper. There was evidence of thorough understanding of some of the material within the component. It was also encouraging to see many candidates attempting to use theories to develop and support arguments. This is an approach that centres should continue to encourage.

Candidates appeared to manage their time well. The questions with higher mark allocations attracted longer responses from most candidates. There was little evidence of candidates running out of time when responding to the final question. There were some very lengthy answers to this particular question.

Inevitably, however, there are aspects of the performance of many candidates that could be improved. Knowledge was patchy at times. Some candidates wrote high quality responses to one question, but were unable to make much progress with others, as they appeared to lack knowledge and understanding of relevant concepts and theories. Although candidates did attempt to use theories to support their responses, these theories were not always well selected. Some candidates attempted to use one or two theories to support their responses to a number of questions. Knowledge of the entire specification covered by this component is an essential pre-requisite of examination success.

Candidates would also benefit from defining the key term used in these questions. This is particularly important when responding to the three-mark questions in Section A. However, in responses to the higher-mark questions it was unclear whether or not candidates understood the topic or theory that was being examined.

SECTION A

Overall candidates performed well on the four multiple-choice questions, though the final one was far more demanding.

01. This question was a little more challenging than either question 2 or question 3 as it tested a pair of concepts relating to organisational change. However, despite this, the majority of candidates (58%) answered it correctly.
02. This question was well answered. Nearly 67% of candidates recognised that leaders engage in risk-seeking activities.
03. Most candidates were able to distinguish between the roles of leaders and managers. Approximately 65% answered this question correctly.
04. This question tested two concepts: personal power and the Tannenbaum & Schmidt continuum. This combination of topics proved tricky as only 20% of candidates answered this question correctly. This suggests that many candidates did not understand these topics fully.
05. A surprising proportion of candidates – around 26% – had no apparent understanding of the concept of empowerment. Thus, they were unable to make progress with answering this question. Of those who understood the concept, most were able to explain a benefit of

empowering employees. However, fewer placed their response in the context of a business suffering from poor communication. It is very important to address all the elements of these three-mark questions. It is equally important not to spend too long on these questions. Some candidates wrote unnecessarily long responses.

06. Most candidates demonstrated understanding of business planning. Fewer, however, explained its importance to managers and only a small minority did so in the context of a growing business. Once again, it is essential to meet the full demands of these questions.
07. This question revealed that a significant proportion of candidates did not understand the concept of strategic change. This is an important part of this component and one that candidates must master. Once again, only a small proportion of candidates (6%) were able to score full marks by explaining why managers implementing strategic change in a large business may encounter resistance.
08. The responses to this question varied hugely in quality. Over 25% of candidates had no apparent understanding of force field analysis and were unable to answer the question. Around 5% did not attempt it. This indicates a significant gap in candidates' knowledge and understanding.

In contrast there were many excellent answers with a further 25% of candidates reaching the top level. The best-quality answers demonstrated understanding of force field analysis and used the information in the item to analyse how May Lai could use this theory to assist her in making this important decision. Weaker responses tended to be more descriptive, drawing on the information in the item, but not using it effectively to illustrate how May Lai could use force field analysis.

09. There were many strong responses to this question. Most candidates had some understanding of teams and the factors affecting their performance. The information in the item was used by most candidates to support their responses. The best answers used this information to contrast the performances of the established teams and that of the new team. Exploring the reasons for this contrast in team performance was at the heart of a good quality answer. Once again, candidates who described the scenario performed less well.
10. This was another question that attracted many good quality responses. The majority of candidates were able to explain why the company's employees had mixed views on the impact of its policies on their levels of motivation. Good responses used the information in the case about employees' contracts of employment to develop arguments explaining why different views might exist.

Less successful approaches included simply arguing why some groups of employees may be motivated – or unmotivated. Disappointingly, a small minority of candidates made limited use of the information in the item and wrote quite theoretical responses.

SECTION B

11. This was another question that produced responses of varying quality. Nearly 10% of candidates wrote well-developed answers that gained marks in the top band (17-20 marks).

At the other extreme a similar proportion scored zero, despite most attempting to answer the question.

The question revealed a number of issues with knowledge and understanding. A fair proportion of candidates did not have any knowledge of the term 'referent power'. Some made no reference to it; others confused it with other forms of power. Most candidates were familiar with the acronym ADKAR. Fewer, however, had good understanding of the theory and how it might be used in circumstances such as those described in the case.

Some candidates also revealed poor examination technique in their responses to this question. Many did not consider both power and ADKAR when developing arguments. Others lost sight of the question and did not link these concepts to Karen's ability to introduce the new technology successfully. Some did not make a judgement as called for by the question and many who did failed to support their views.

There were many very long responses to this question. However, many of these responses scored relatively poorly because they lacked focus and were often highly descriptive and did not address the question. Candidates would benefit from taking some time to plan their answers. This will help in terms of focus and relevance.