

New
Specification



Rewarding Learning

ADVANCED SUBSIDIARY (AS)
General Certificate of Education
2024

Professional Business Services

Assessment Unit AS 1
assessing

Introduction to Professional Business Services

[SPS11]

FRIDAY 31 MAY, AFTERNOON

**MARK
SCHEME**

General Marking Instructions

Introduction

The main purpose of the mark scheme is to ensure that examinations are marked accurately, consistently and fairly. The mark scheme provides examiners with an indication of the nature and range of candidates' responses likely to be worthy of credit. It also sets out the criteria which they should apply in allocating marks to candidates' responses.

Assessment objectives

Below are the assessment objectives for **GCE Professional Business Services**.

Candidates should be able to:

- AO1** Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of terms, concepts, theories, methods and models used by professional business services firms and their client businesses.
- AO2** Apply knowledge and understanding of concepts, theories, methods and models used by professional business services firms and their client businesses.
- AO3** Investigate, analyse and evaluate concepts, theories, methods and models as used by professional business services firms and their client businesses.

Quality of candidates' responses

In marking the examination papers, examiners should be looking for a quality of response reflecting the level of maturity which may reasonably be expected of a 17- or 18-year-old which is the age at which the majority of candidates sit their GCE examinations.

Flexibility in marking

Mark schemes are not intended to be totally prescriptive. No mark scheme can cover all the responses which candidates may produce. In the event of unanticipated answers, examiners are expected to use their professional judgement to assess the validity of answers. If an answer is particularly problematic, then examiners should seek the guidance of the Supervising Examiner.

Positive marking

Examiners are encouraged to be positive in their marking, giving appropriate credit for what candidates know, understand and can do rather than penalising candidates for errors or omissions. Examiners should make use of the whole of the available mark range for any particular question and be prepared to award full marks for a response which is as good as might reasonably be expected of a 17- or 18-year-old GCE candidate.

Awarding zero marks

Marks should only be awarded for valid responses and no marks should be awarded for an answer which is completely incorrect or inappropriate.

Marking calculations

In marking answers involving calculations, examiners should apply the 'own figure rule' so that candidates are not penalised more than once for a computational error. To avoid a candidate being penalised, marks can be awarded where correct conclusions or inferences are made from their incorrect calculations.

Types of mark schemes

Mark schemes for tasks or questions which require candidates to respond in extended written form are marked on the basis of levels of response which take account of the quality of written communication. Other questions which require only short answers are marked on a point for point basis with marks awarded for each valid piece of information provided.

Levels of response

In deciding which level of response to award, examiners should look for the 'best fit' bearing in mind that weakness in one area may be compensated for by strength in another. In deciding which mark within a particular level to award to any response, examiners are expected to use their professional judgement.

The following guidance is provided to assist examiners.

- **Threshold performance:** Response which just merits inclusion in the level and should be awarded a mark at or near the bottom of the range.
- **Intermediate performance:** Response which clearly merits inclusion in the level and should be awarded a mark at or near the middle of the range.
- **High performance:** Response which fully satisfies the level description and should be awarded a mark at or near the top of the range.

Quality of written communication

Quality of written communication is taken into account in assessing candidates' responses to all tasks and questions that require them to respond in extended written form. These tasks and questions are marked on the basis of levels of response. The description for each level of response includes reference to the quality of written communication.

For conciseness, quality of written communication is distinguished within either three or four levels of response.

Where there are three levels of response, quality of written communication is distinguished as follows:

Level 1: Quality of written communication is basic.

Level 2: Quality of written communication is good.

Level 3: Quality of written communication is excellent.

In interpreting these level descriptions, examiners should refer to the more detailed guidance provided below:

Level 1 (Basic): The candidate makes only a limited selection and use of an appropriate form and style of writing. The organisation of material may lack clarity and coherence. There is little use of specialist vocabulary. Presentation, spelling, punctuation and grammar may be such that intended meaning is not clear.

Level 2 (Good): The candidate makes a reasonable selection and use of an appropriate form and style of writing. Relevant material is organised with some clarity and coherence. There is some use of appropriate specialist vocabulary. Presentation, spelling, punctuation and grammar are sufficiently competent to make meaning clear.

Level 3 (Excellent): The candidate successfully selects and uses the most appropriate form and style of writing. Relevant material is organised with a high degree of clarity and coherence. There is widespread and accurate use of appropriate specialist vocabulary. Presentation, spelling, punctuation and grammar are of a sufficiently high standard to make meaning clear.

Where there are four levels of response, quality of written communication is distinguished as follows:

Level 1: Quality of written communication is basic.

Level 2: Quality of written communication is satisfactory.

Level 3: Quality of written communication is good.

Level 4: Quality of written communication is excellent.

In interpreting these level descriptions, examiners should refer to the more detailed guidance provided below.

Level 1 (Basic): The candidate makes only a basic selection and use of an appropriate form and style of writing. The organisation of material may lack clarity and coherence. There is little use of specialist vocabulary. Presentation, spelling, punctuation and grammar may be such that intended meaning is not clear.

Level 2 (Satisfactory): The candidate makes a satisfactory selection and use of an appropriate form and style of writing. Relevant material is organised with some degree of clarity and coherence. There is some use of appropriate specialist vocabulary. Presentation, spelling, punctuation and grammar are of a satisfactory standard to make meaning evident.

Level 3 (Good): The candidate makes a good selection and use of an appropriate form and style of writing. Relevant material is organised with good clarity and coherence. There is good use of appropriate specialist vocabulary. Presentation, spelling, punctuation and grammar are of a good standard to make meaning clear.

Level 4 (Excellent): The candidate successfully selects and uses the most appropriate form and style of writing. Relevant material is organised with a high degree of clarity and coherence. There is widespread and accurate use of appropriate specialist vocabulary. Presentation, spelling, punctuation and grammar are of the highest standard to make meaning absolutely clear.

1 (a) AO1

Responses may include:

- Profit maximisation
- Survival
- Growth
- Increased market share
- Positive corporate image
- Social responsibility

All valid responses will be given credit
(3 × [1])

[3]

(b) AO1

Responses may include:

- Fairness and integrity – professional business services firms will ensure fees reflect the value of services provided and are considered fair and reasonable by clients. Professional business services firms not entering into agreements with competitors to unlawfully restrict competition/set price/allocate clients and not gathering information on competitors, e.g. industrial espionage. Having integrity occasionally requires a professional business services firm to deliver unwelcome or challenging information to clients, rather than being evasive or withholding information in fear of losing the client.
- Trust and confidentiality – the ability of professional business services firms to protect the confidentiality of such information is critical to maintaining the trust of their clients. Regulations that specify legal requirements for information security tend to improve compliance in this regard. If these values are compromised, it can be difficult or even impossible to regain and can be devastating to the survival of an organisation. Examples include the confidential storage of client information; not disclosing a client’s information to any other parties, e.g. competitors, and not using information obtained for personal gain (e.g. buying stocks or shares).
- Transparency and openness – professional business services firms should be open and transparent about fees or how opinions and advice is given and received.
- Freedom from bias or influence – professional business services firms need to be objective in all their dealings with clients. Professional business services firms should act independently in forming professional opinions and in collating the advice given to clients. If there is a difference of opinion, professional business services firms should not alter their advice but try to handle it constructively and professionally.

All valid responses will be given credit

- [1] Identification of principle
 - [2] Identification of principle with basic explanation
 - [3] Identification of principle with good explanation
- (3 × [1])

[3]

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2 AO1, AO2, AO3

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MARKS**

Responses may include:

- Culture – a code of conduct can reflect the culture of CommsTel, whereas external regulations are generic and a legal requirement.
- Commitment – a code of conduct can show a commitment by CommsTel to deliver high standards beyond the external requirements they face from regulations.
- Confidence – a code of conduct can give CommsTel’s customers a greater confidence about the quality of service provided. External regulation will also increase customer confidence but with greater power of enforcement.
- Costs – a code of conduct is less likely to increase costs significantly for CommsTel. Whereas external regulation can be costly to implement.
- Time – a code of conduct takes less time to construct/prepare whereas external regulation can take time to respond to changes in the business environment. This can leave CommsTel exposed to standards that will not regulate firms until the legal framework is brought up to date.

All valid responses will be given credit

[1] Identification of benefit

[2] Identification of benefit with explanation

[3] Identification of benefit with explanation and application to CommsTel

[4] Identification of benefit with explanation and application to CommsTel analysis and evaluation are basic

[5] Identification of benefit with explanation and application to CommsTel analysis and evaluation are good

(2 × [5])

[10]

10

3 AO1, AO2

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Responses may include:

Market penetration – existing product – existing market

- Sprackburn is increasing the brand loyalty of customers.
- Encouraging consumers to purchase glasses rather than their competitors' products making them affordable.
- Implementation of pricing strategies, e.g. price reduction.
- Promotional strategies, e.g. increased advertising.

Product development – new product – existing market

- Sprackburn to use more fashionable products.
- Sprackburn will specialise in quality glasses competitively priced.
- New products offered by Sprackburn namely the development of an App and 3D Technology will assist and inform the customer's experience.
- The development of revolutionary anti-scratch lens for Sprackburn's Vista Range.

Market development – existing product – new market

- Forging business links with leading manufacturers allows Sprackburn to maintain and develop their high-end glasses range.
- Walk-in stores with quick turnaround times allow Sprackburn to capture more of the market.
- The forging of business links with other manufacturers permits Sprackburn to grow their market much quicker.
- Sprackburn are offering home visits.

Diversification – new product – new market

- In 2022, Sprackburn introduced a revolutionary new anti-scratch lens through their Vista range primarily for children.
- In 2023, Sprackburn diversified through the development of binoculars, microscopes and medical optical equipment, supplying new markets.

All valid responses will be given credit

[1] Identification of strategy

[2] Identification of strategy with explanation

[3] Identification and basic explanation of strategy with examples for Sprackburn Optical Ltd

[4] Identification and good explanation of strategy with examples for Sprackburn Optical Ltd

[5] Identification and excellent explanation of strategy with examples for Sprackburn Optical Ltd

(2 × [5])

[10]

10

4 (a) AO1

Responses may include:

- Human resources
- Financial
- Business technology
- Leadership and management
- Project management

(2 × [1])

[2]

(b) AO1, AO2, AO3

Responses may include:

Good communication

- It has the ability to enhance the relationship of ABC Human Resources Ltd with its client.
- To establish an effective working relationship.
- ABC Human Resources Ltd must clearly understand their client's needs.
- ABC Human Resources Ltd must be able to clearly articulate their understanding of the client's needs, without the use of overly technical jargon.
- ABC Human Resources Ltd needs to maintain timely and appropriate communication throughout the duration of the project.
- If effective communication is not in place it means that there could be misunderstandings between the ABC Human Resources Ltd and its client.
- This could be achieved using a variety of methods of communication, which may include: face-to-face, written, non-verbal, electronic.

Professionalism

- Confidentiality – ABC Human Resources Ltd must be able to share and make decisions with their clients in a professional and confidential manner. For example, ABC Human Resources Ltd must not disclose any information relating to their clients to a third party.
- Knowledge – ABC Human Resources Ltd has a high degree of knowledge and expertise in their chosen field. ABC Human Resources Ltd will be able to use their knowledge of the latest developments in their field to the benefit of their clients.
- Experience – ABC Human Resources Ltd will have a diversity of opinion and experience which often brings strengths and knowledge to a team. ABC Human Resources Ltd can harness the knowledge gathered to advise and benefit their clients in decision-making.
- Problem-solving – ABC Human Resources Ltd can use their industry expertise to solve financial problems/conflict within their client's business. ABC Human Resources Ltd will implement their skills to avert problems and deal with issues or concerns of their clients, e.g. taxation issues.

Trust

- ABC Human Resources Ltd and the client must establish a trust relationship. This involves both credibility and reliability. Credibility refers to how believable the ABC Human Resources Ltd is and reliability refers to the extent to which the ABC Human Resources Ltd and its client can count on one another to deliver on agreements.
- The clients can trust the opinions and advice of ABC Human Resources Ltd.

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MARKS

- The clients and the ABC Human Resources Ltd can trust each other with ideas.
- ABC Human Resources Ltd trust their clients that they will get paid on time.
- ABC Human Resources Ltd trust their clients not to go to another professional business services firm before the arrangement is completed.

Intellect and ideas

- ABC Human Resources Ltd can brainstorm to refine ideas and use everyone's input to develop specific ideas for the client.
- ABC Human Resources Ltd to work towards a single creative idea for the client.

All valid responses will be given credit

[0] is awarded for a response not worthy of credit

Level 1 [1]–[4] Basic

- Basic knowledge and understanding of up to four of the key elements identified which are required for effective relationships.
- Limited or no relevant application to ABC Human Resources Ltd.
- Analysis is basic.
- The quality of the candidate's written communication is basic.

Level 2 [5]–[8] Satisfactory

- Satisfactory knowledge and understanding of at least two of the key elements identified which are required for effective relationships.
- Satisfactory application of the key elements to ABC Human Resources Ltd.
- Analysis is satisfactory.
- The quality of the candidate's written communication is satisfactory.

Level 3 [9]–[12] Good

- Good knowledge and understanding of two or three of the key elements identified which are required for effective relationships.
- Good application of the key elements to ABC Human Resources Ltd
- Analysis is good.
- The quality of the candidate's written communication is good.

Level 4 [13]–[16] Excellent

- Excellent knowledge and understanding of the four key elements identified which are required for effective relationships.
- Excellent application of the key elements to ABC Human Resources Ltd.
- Analysis is excellent.
- The quality of the candidate's written communication is excellent. [16]

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Responses may include:

Online surveys

Advantages of online surveys may include:

- Low cost – very low cost per participant. There are plenty of websites and platforms that can create Pace plc survey (fast and affordable).
- Increased response rate – the low cost and overall convenience of online surveys bring in a high response rate to Pace plc. Respondents get to answer questions at their own time and at a pace they choose.
- Real-time access – respondents' answers are stored automatically so Pace plc get results in time. This turns analysing Pace plc results into effortless and immediate action.
- Accessibility from multiple devices – the sheer number of mobile friendly devices means Pace plc's ways of reaching respondents multiplies greatly. From laptops to mobile phones and tablets.
- Convenience – respondents can answer questions in their own time and can even have flexibility with completion time.
- No interviewer – Interviewers acting on behalf of Pace plc can also influence responses in some cases.
- Time savings – online technology provides designers of Pace plc the ability to create a survey in a fraction of the time it would take to print and distribute one, not to mention posting one out.
- Data collection – is much easier with surveys, which tend to use easy to read data sources that can be compiled and analysed as needed for Pace plc market research needs.
- Sample size – surveys allow Pace plc to reach thousands of possible participants, if necessary, which ensures a more accurate sample on which to draw conclusions.
- Candid responses – allows participants to feel more candid with their responses. To get accurate data, Pace plc need their participants to be as honest as possible with their answers, especially if it's clear that the answers will remain confidential.

Disadvantages of surveys may include:

- Survey fraud – if the survey is long and/or confusing, Pace plc might get fake answers. There is less accountability and the chances of respondents just hitting buttons to finish are high.
- Sample choice – survey research is prone to Pace plc error, where assumptions are made about the sample that may not be accurate. For example, if Pace plc are researching low income groups, many may not have email access, so their voice won't be heard in Pace plc data.
- Rigidity – before Pace plc develop their survey, they need to remember to account for all possible answers and program the survey accordingly. If Pace plc fail to account for all possible answers, they may be missing out on data.
- Easy to miss/dismiss – sheer volume of emails and notifications respondents receive every single day; Pace plc online survey may end up being completely missed by a large portion of Pace plc prospective respondents.
- Response bias – Pace plc respondents not wanting to provide honest answers for fears of being judged, or basic response fatigue, Pace plc should plan on this being a challenge.
- No interviewer – lack of a trained interviewer to clarify and probe can lead to less reliable data for Pace plc.

Published accounts and business reports

Advantages of published accounts and business reports may include:

- Performance assessment and comparison – published accounts and business reports provide information to Pace plc that is critical to their

decision making. Business reports usually identify key areas of strength and weakness in a company's management, a running record of a business's performance and guidance for the company's strategic priorities. Published accounts allow Pace plc the ability to compare their performance with competitors.

- Quicker – published accounts and business reports from competitors have information which Pace plc can access, for example sales, profit and trends
- Inexpensive – Pace plc may use published accounts and business reports which are often free to access.
- Accuracy – researchers will be specialist so the information collected is likely to be reliable and can assist Pace plc in planning and financial decision-making.

Disadvantages of published accounts and business reports may include:

- Not specific – the published accounts and business reports may not be gathered for the specific purpose that Pace plc needs, or it is not relevant in the current context. Therefore, if Pace plc want to obtain specific information, they may have to employ a research company, this can be expensive for the business.
- Outdated – the published accounts and business reports may be out of date and therefore inaccurate for Pace plc purposes.

All valid responses will be given credit

[0] is awarded for a response not worthy of credit

Level 1 [1]–[4] Basic

- Basic knowledge and understanding of a primary and secondary research method.
- Limited or no relevant application to Pace plc.
- Analysis and evaluation are basic.
- Basic judgement made.
- The quality of the candidate's written communication is basic.

Level 2 [5]–[8] Satisfactory

- Satisfactory knowledge and understanding of a primary and secondary research method.
- Satisfactory application to Pace plc.
- Analysis and evaluation are satisfactory.
- Satisfactory judgement made.
- The quality of the candidate's written communication is satisfactory.

Level [9]–[12] Good

- Good knowledge and understanding of a primary and secondary research method.
- Good application to Pace plc.
- Analysis and evaluation are good.
- Good judgement made.
- The quality of the candidate's written communication is good.

Level [13]–[16] Excellent

- Excellent knowledge and understanding of a primary and secondary research method.
- Excellent application to Pace plc.
- Analysis and evaluation are excellent.
- Excellent judgement made.
- The quality of the candidate's written communication is excellent.

[16]

16

Responses may include:

- Active listening – the professional business service consultant acts as the negotiator and they have the skills to listen actively to the employees and DEF Textiles during the discussion. Active listening involves the ability to read body language as well as verbal communication. It is important to listen to the other party to find areas for compromise during the meeting.
- Interpersonal skills – effective negotiators like the professional business services consultant have the interpersonal skills to maintain a good working relationship with those involved in the negotiation at DEF Textiles. Negotiators with patience and the ability to persuade others without using manipulation can maintain a positive atmosphere during a difficult negotiation.
- Problem analysis – the professional business service consultant must have the skills to analyse a problem to determine the interests of the employees and DEF Textiles in the negotiation. A detailed problem analysis identifies the issue, the interested parties and the outcome goals. Identifying the issues for both sides can help to find a compromise for all parties.
- Emotional control – it is vital that the professional business service consultant has the ability to keep their emotions in check during the negotiation. A negotiation on contentious issues can be frustrating, allowing emotions to take control during the meeting and this can lead to unfavourable results. Employees negotiating to transfer to other plants may become too emotionally involved to accept a compromise with DEF Textiles and take an all or nothing approach, which breaks down the communication between the two parties.
- Verbal communication – the professional business services consultant must have the ability to communicate clearly and effectively to the employees and DEF Textiles during the negotiation. Misunderstandings can occur if the negotiator does not state their case clearly. During the meeting, an effective negotiator must have the skills to state their desired outcome as well as their reasoning.
- Collaboration and teamwork – negotiation is not necessarily a one side against another arrangement. Effective negotiators like the professional business service consultant must have the skills to work together as a team and foster a collaborative atmosphere during negotiations with the employees and DEF Textiles. Those involved in a negotiation on both sides of the issue must work together to reach an agreeable solution.
- Problem solving – the professional business services consultant with negotiation skills has the ability to seek a variety of solutions to problems with the employees and DEF Textiles. Instead of focusing on their ultimate goal for the negotiation, the individual with skills can focus on solving the problem, which may be a breakdown in communication, to benefit both sides.
- Decision making – good leaders with negotiation skills have the ability to act decisively during a negotiation. It may be necessary during a bargaining arrangement to agree to a compromise quickly to end a stalemate.
- Ethics and reliability – ethical standards and reliability in an effective negotiator like the professional business service consultant promote a trusting environment for negotiations. Both sides (the employees and DEF Textiles) in a negotiation must trust that the other party will follow through on promises and agreements.
- Preparation – before entering the negotiation meeting, the professional business service consultant prepares for the meeting. Preparation includes determining goals, areas for discussion and alternatives to the stated goals. In addition, negotiators study the history of the relationship between the employees and DEF Textiles to find areas of agreement and common goals.

All valid responses will be given credit

[0] is awarded for a response not worthy of credit

Level 1 [1]–[5] Basic

- Basic knowledge and understanding of how negotiation can be used to influence others.
- Application is basic with limited or no relevance to DEF Textiles.
- Analysis is basic.
- The quality of the candidate’s written communication is basic.

Level 2 [6]–[10] Satisfactory

- Satisfactory knowledge and understanding of how negotiation can be used to influence others.
- Application is satisfactory with reasonable reference to DEF Textiles.
- Analysis is satisfactory.
- The quality of the candidate’s written communication is satisfactory.

Level 3 [11]–[15] Good

- Good knowledge and understanding of how negotiation can be used to influence others.
- Application is good with appropriate reference to DEF Textiles.
- Analysis is good.
- The quality of the candidate’s written communication is good.

Level 4 [16]–[20] Excellent

- Excellent knowledge and understanding of how negotiation can be used to influence others.
- Application is excellent with clear reference to DEF Textiles.
- Analysis is excellent.
- The quality of the candidate’s written communication is excellent. [20]

Total

**AVAILABLE
MARKS**

20

80