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CAMBRIDGE
International Education

Cambridge International AS & A Level

BUSINESS **9609/42**

Paper 4 Business Strategy **February/March 2025**

MARK SCHEME

Maximum Mark: 40

Published

This mark scheme is published as an aid to teachers and candidates, to indicate the requirements of the examination. It shows the basis on which Examiners were instructed to award marks. It does not indicate the details of the discussions that took place at an Examiners' meeting before marking began, which would have considered the acceptability of alternative answers.

Mark schemes should be read in conjunction with the question paper and the Principal Examiner Report for Teachers.

Cambridge International will not enter into discussions about these mark schemes.

Cambridge International is publishing the mark schemes for the February/March 2025 series for most Cambridge IGCSE, Cambridge International A and AS Level components, and some Cambridge O Level components.

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Generic Marking Principles

These general marking principles must be applied by all examiners when marking candidate answers. They should be applied alongside the specific content of the mark scheme or generic level descriptions for a question. Each question paper and mark scheme will also comply with these marking principles.

GENERIC MARKING PRINCIPLE 1:

Marks must be awarded in line with:

- the specific content of the mark scheme or the generic level descriptors for the question
- the specific skills defined in the mark scheme or in the generic level descriptors for the question
- the standard of response required by a candidate as exemplified by the standardisation scripts.

GENERIC MARKING PRINCIPLE 2:

Marks awarded are always **whole marks** (not half marks, or other fractions).

GENERIC MARKING PRINCIPLE 3:

Marks must be awarded **positively**:

- marks are awarded for correct/valid answers, as defined in the mark scheme. However, credit is given for valid answers which go beyond the scope of the syllabus and mark scheme, referring to your Team Leader as appropriate
- marks are awarded when candidates clearly demonstrate what they know and can do
- marks are not deducted for errors
- marks are not deducted for omissions
- answers should only be judged on the quality of spelling, punctuation and grammar when these features are specifically assessed by the question as indicated by the mark scheme. The meaning, however, should be unambiguous.

GENERIC MARKING PRINCIPLE 4:

Rules must be applied consistently, e.g. in situations where candidates have not followed instructions or in the application of generic level descriptors.

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GENERIC MARKING PRINCIPLE 5: Marks should be awarded using the full range of marks defined in the mark scheme for the question (however; the use of the full mark range may be limited according to the quality of the candidate responses seen).
GENERIC MARKING PRINCIPLE 6: Marks awarded are based solely on the requirements as defined in the mark scheme. Marks should not be awarded with grade thresholds or grade descriptors in mind.

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Social Science-Specific Marking Principles
(for point-based marking)

1 Components using point-based marking:

- Point marking is often used to reward knowledge, understanding and application of skills. We give credit where the candidate's answer shows relevant knowledge, understanding and application of skills in answering the question. We do not give credit where the answer shows confusion.

From this it follows that we:

a DO credit answers which are worded differently from the mark scheme if they clearly convey the same meaning (unless the mark scheme requires a specific term)
b DO credit alternative answers/examples which are not written in the mark scheme if they are correct
c DO credit answers where candidates give more than one correct answer in one prompt/numbered/scaffolded space where extended writing is required rather than list-type answers. For example, questions that require *n* reasons (e.g. State two reasons …).
d DO NOT credit answers simply for using a 'key term' unless that is all that is required. (Check for evidence it is understood and not used wrongly.)
e DO NOT credit answers which are obviously self-contradicting or trying to cover all possibilities
f DO NOT give further credit for what is effectively repetition of a correct point already credited unless the language itself is being tested. This applies equally to 'mirror statements' (i.e. polluted/not polluted).
g DO NOT require spellings to be correct, unless this is part of the test. However spellings of syllabus terms must allow for clear and unambiguous separation from other syllabus terms with which they may be confused (e.g. Corrasion/Corrosion)

2 Presentation of mark scheme:

- Slashes (/) or the word 'or' separate alternative ways of making the same point.
- Semi colons (;) bullet points (•) or figures in brackets (1) separate different points.
- Content in the answer column in brackets is for examiner information/context to clarify the marking but is not required to earn the mark (except Accounting syllabuses where they indicate negative numbers).

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3 Calculation questions:

- The mark scheme will show the steps in the most likely correct method(s), the mark for each step, the correct answer(s) and the mark for each answer
- If working/explanation is considered essential for full credit, this will be indicated in the question paper and in the mark scheme. In all other instances, the correct answer to a calculation should be given full credit, even if no supporting working is shown.
- Where the candidate uses a valid method which is not covered by the mark scheme, award equivalent marks for reaching equivalent stages.
- Where an answer makes use of a candidate's own incorrect figure from previous working, the 'own figure rule' applies: full marks will be given if a correct and complete method is used. Further guidance will be included in the mark scheme where necessary and any exceptions to this general principle will be noted.

4 Annotation:

- For point marking, ticks can be used to indicate correct answers and crosses can be used to indicate wrong answers. There is no direct relationship between ticks and marks. Ticks have no defined meaning for levels of response marking.
- For levels of response marking, the level awarded should be annotated on the script.
- Other annotations will be used by examiners as agreed during standardisation, and the meaning will be understood by all examiners who marked that paper.

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Annotations guidance for centres

Examiners use a system of annotations as a shorthand for communicating their marking decisions to one another. Examiners are trained during the standardisation process on how and when to use annotations. The purpose of annotations is to inform the standard isation and monitoring processes and guide the supervising examiners when they are checking the work of examiners within their team. The meaning of annotations and how they are used is specific to each component and is understood by all examiners who mark the component.

We publish annotations in our mark schemes to help centres understand the annotations they may see on copies of scripts. Note that there may not be a direct correlation between the number of annotations on a script and the mark awarded. Similarly, the use of an annotation may not be an indication of the quality of the response.

The annotations listed below were available to examiners marking this component in this series.

Annotations

Annotation	Meaning	To award
	For objective points that are correct.	Correct
	For objective points that are wrong.	Incorrect
 and 	When the candidate has attempted something, but the mark/skill has not been awarded.	Unclear (both)
Highlighter	To highlight a point or section of an answer that justifies the mark/annotation.	Highlight
BOD	When the candidate has attempted something, and the mark/skill has been awarded.	Benefit of doubt
NUT	When the context has not been used.	Not using text/context
SEEN	To show a page/section has been seen/read.	Seen
NAQ	When the response is not focussed on answering the question.	Not answering question

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Annotation	Meaning	To award
REP	The repetition of a previous point in a response **or** candidate is copying the case study/data.	Repetition
OFR	The own figure rule applies – acts as a mark/tick.	Own figure rule
K	When limited knowledge (AO1) has been awarded.	Knowledge (AO1) L1
DEV	When developed knowledge (AO1) has been awarded.	Developed knowledge (AO1) L2
APP	When AO2 has been awarded. The number of APPs should match the mark awarded.	Application (AO2) L1
		Application (AO2) L2
A1	When AO3 at Level 1 has been awarded.	Analysis (AO3) L1
A2	When AO3 at Level 2 has been awarded.	Analysis (AO3) L2
A3	When AO3 at Level 3 has been awarded.	Analysis (AO3) L3
N1	When AO4 at Level 1 has been awarded.	Evaluation (AO4) L1
N2	When AO4 at Level 2 has been awarded.	Evaluation (AO4) L2
N3	When AO4 at Level 3 has been awarded.	Evaluation (AO4) L3

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Guidance on using levels-based marking

Marking of work should be positive, rewarding achievement where possible, but clearly differentiating across the whole range of marks, where appropriate.

The examiner should look at the work and then make a judgement about which level statement is the best fit. In practice, work does not always match one level statement precisely so a judgement may need to be made between two or more level statements.

Once a best-fit level statement has been identified, use the following guidance to decide on a specific mark:
- If the candidate's work **convincingly** meets the level statement, award the highest mark.
- If the candidate's work **adequately** meets the level statement, award the most appropriate mark in the middle of the range.
- If the candidate's work **just** meets the level statement, award the lowest mark.
- L1, L2 etc. must be clearly annotated on the response at the point where the level is achieved.

Assessment objectives

AO1 Knowledge and understanding
Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of business concepts, terms and theories.

AO2 Application
Apply knowledge and understanding of business concepts, terms and theories to problems and issues in a variety of familiar and unfamiliar business situations and contexts.

AO3 Analysis
Analyse business problems, issues and situations by:
- using appropriate methods and techniques to make sense of qualitative and quantitative business information
- searching for causes, impact and consequences
- distinguishing between factual evidence and opinion or value judgement
- drawing valid inferences and making valid generalisations.

AO4 Evaluation
Evaluate evidence in order to make reasoned judgements, present substantiated conclusions and, where appropriate, make recommendations for action and implementation.

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PREPARATION FOR MARKING

1 Make sure that you have completed the relevant training and have access to the *RM Assessor Guide*.
2 Make sure that you have read and understand the question paper, which you can download from https://support.rm.com/ca
3 Log in to RM Assessor then mark and submit the required number of practice and standardisation scripts. You will need to mark the standardisation scripts to the required accuracy in order to be approved for marking live scripts. You may be asked to re-mark them, or to mark a second sample, if you do not meet the required accuracy on your first attempt.

MARKING PROCESS

1 Mark strictly to the FINAL mark scheme, applying the criteria consistently and the general marking principles outlined on the previous page.
2 If you are in doubt about applying the mark scheme, consult your Team Leader.
3 Mark at a steady rate through the marking period. Do not rush, and do not leave too much until the end. If you anticipate a problem in meeting the deadline, contact your Team Leader immediately and the Examiners' Helpdesk.
4 Examiners will prepare a brief report on the performance of candidates to send to their Team Leader via email by the end of the marking period. The Examiner should note strengths seen in answers and common errors or weaknesses. Constructive comments on the question paper, mark scheme or procedures are also appreciated.

MARKING SPECIFICS

Crossed out work

1 All of a candidate's answers, *crossed out* or not, *optional* or not, must be marked.
2 The only response not to be marked is one that has been crossed out and replaced by another response for that exact same question.
3 Consequently, if a candidate has crossed out their response to an optional question and gone on to answer a different optional question then both attempts must be marked. The higher mark will be awarded by the system according to the rubric.

0 (zero) marks or NR (no response)

1 Award **NR** if there is nothing at all written in answer to that question (often the case for optional questions).
2 Award **NR** if there is a comment which is not an attempt at the question (e.g. 'can't do it' or 'don't know' etc.)
3 Award **NR** if there is a symbol which is not an attempt at the question, such as a dash or question mark.
4 Award **0** (zero) if there is any attempt at the question which does not score marks. This includes copying the question onto an Answer Booklet.

Annotation

1 Every question must have at least one annotation e.g. <NAQ> if it is an NR and <X> or <seen> if 0 marks are awarded.
2 Every page of a script must have at least one annotation e.g. <BP> for a blank page.

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Please refer to this grid for BOTH questions.

Level	AO1 Knowledge and understanding 3 marks	AO2 Application 2 marks	AO3 Analysis 8 marks	AO4 Evaluation 7 marks
	Description	**Description**	**Description**	**Description**
3			**7–8 marks** **Developed analysis of the overall strategy** that identifies connections between causes, impacts and/or consequences.	**6–7 marks** **Effective evaluation** A developed judgement/conclusion is made in the business context that draws together developed evaluative comments which balance some key arguments in the business context.
2	**2–3 marks** **Developed knowledge** of relevant key term(s) and/or factor(s) is used to answer the question.	**2 marks** **Developed application** of relevant point(s) to the business context.	**4–6 marks** **Developed analysis of individual strategic element(s)** that identifies connections between causes, impacts and/or consequences.	**3–5 marks** **Developed evaluation** • A developed judgement/conclusion is made. • Developed evaluative comments which balance some key arguments.
1	**1 mark** **Limited knowledge** of relevant key term(s) and/or factor(s) is used to answer the question.	**1 mark** **Limited application** of relevant point(s) to the business context.	**1–3 marks** **Limited analysis** that identifies connections between causes, impacts and/or consequences.	**1–2 marks** **Limited evaluation** • A judgement/conclusion is made with limited supporting comment/evidence. • An attempt is made to balance the arguments.
0	**0 marks** No creditable response.	**0 marks** No creditable response.	**0 marks** No creditable response.	**0 marks** No creditable response.

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Question	Answer	Marks
1	**Evaluate DCE's marketing strategy between 2019 and 2024.** **Indicative content** **AO1 Knowledge and understanding** Knowledge K (max 1 mark) can be awarded for any relevant business knowledge about marketing, including: • Marketing objectives • Demand and supply • Markets (consumer, industrial, local, national and international) • Mass and niche marketing • Market segmentation • Customer relationship marketing • Market research (primary and secondary) and sampling • The marketing mix (product, price, place, promotion) • Elasticity (price, income and promotional) • Product development, including R&D • Sales forecasting • The need for the marketing strategy to be consistent with the business, the product and the market • The need for and development of a coordinated marketing strategy • The development of marketing strategies that are focused towards achieving specific marketing objectives • The changing role of Information Technology (IT) and Artificial Intelligence (AI) in marketing • The contents of a marketing plan: objectives, resources, research, marketing mix • The benefits and limitations of marketing planning Award DEV for any explanation of relevant business knowledge, up to a max of 2 marks. Marketing strategy is when a business plans to meet their marketing objective K . Marketing objectives may include sales maximisation and increasing market share DEV . — 1 K for identification and 1 DEV for a point of explanation Promotion is the communication from the business to the custome K . It includes advertising, sales and direct promotion DEV . The aim of promotion is often to increase awareness of a product DEV . — 1 K for identification and 2 DEVs for two points of explanation	**20**

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Question	Answer	Marks
1	**AO2 Application** Application APP (max 2 marks) can be awarded for **applying knowledge, analysis or evaluation of marketing** to DCE between 2019 and 2024. • DCE goal is to have high quality services which means they will have a premium brand image • Social media accounts to promote the business can be used to evaluate the marketing mix • Any use of the Market research information in context • Social media subscribers increase rapidly • DCE's sales promotion techniques: loyalty scheme and free lessons for referrals • The use of pricing methods in context such as price skimming • 10% increase in revenue objective • Use of AI • **Any use of the case content in context between 2019 and 2024.** **AO3 Analysis** (A1 and A2 and A3) Analysis is likely to be based on the different marketing activities and the impact on DCE, including: • Social media allows students to access the business which will increase brand recognition as seen by the increase in subscribers this will bring in more customers and sales. However, they may be missing customers that are in different platforms therefore losing on potential sales. • The use of social media would allow the business to find out what customers want especially parents as they would be looking for online teaching business. This would allow the business to have a USP and beat the intense competition. However, while social media can be effective has it reached the target customers effectively? • The marketing strategy failed as DCE did not achieve the goal of increased revenue by 10% as in 2022 revenue starts to decrease which would lead to less retained earnings and less ability for the business to expand. However, maintaining quality will allow them to stand out and possibly profits can start to rise. • DCE goal is to have high quality which means they will have a premium brand image this would allow them to charge premium prices increasing revenue and profits. However, the competitors have other USP that may take away customers especially if they care about affordability.	

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Question	Answer	Marks
1	**AO4 Evaluation** (N1 and N2 and N3). Evaluation will depend upon which element/s of marketing have been discussed previously: • DCE's marketing strategy was successful as they were able to increase sales rapidly in the beginning specifically 2020 and have more subscribers this means they would be able to eventually achieve their 10% revenue increase. However, this depends on the intensity of competition and their ability to keep innovating to beat any external factors they may face. • DCE's marketing strategy was not successful as the revenue decreased which means they may be struggling to have retained profits and repay any debts this would lead them to fail. • DCE's marketing strategy was not successful as revenue decreased leading to lower profits which means they will need to apply new services and follow the new proposed marketing objectives for success. However, this success is dependent on how well they apply their upcoming product development and maintaining brand identity. Accept all valid responses.	

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Question	Answer	Marks
2	**Advise Daniel on the importance of transformational leadership to ensure the survival of DCE.** **Indicative content** **AO1 Knowledge and understanding** ***Transformational leadership****: the leader works with teams to identify the need for change, creates a vision to inspire people to accept change and implements change with the cooperation of the team.* Knowledge K can be awarded for any relevant business knowledge about leadership and/or transformational leadership. Do not reward repetition of the contents of the case. Any explanation of the contents is rewardable. • Leadership – motivating a group of people towards business objectives/common goal • the purpose of leadership • the qualities of a good leader • Transformational leadership – change culture of organisation to achieve improved performance during a time where significant change is needed for the business to survive. • Charisma, inspiring, offers new challenges to employees, understands individual needs of each team member • Any leadership theories – trait, behavioural, contingency, power and influence and transformational Award DEV for any explanation of relevant business knowledge, up to a max of 2 marks. **AO2 Application** Application APP (max 2 marks) can be awarded for **applying knowledge, analysis or evaluation of (transformational) leadership** to DCE between 2019 and 2024. • Private Limited Company – limited liability • Social media accounts to promote the business • Social media subscribers increase rapidly • If transformational leadership is used employees can be focused and follow targets which mean *DCE can achieve their goals of brand identity and higher revenue* • Any information used from the market research results • Change may create a culture of demotivated employees and this was a concern of Carl's • Use of AI • Any use of information from the case in context of discussion about leadership styles/theories.	**20**

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Question	Answer	Marks
2	**AO3 Analysis** (A1 and A2 and A3) Analysis is likely to be based on the how transformational leadership can help the extension strategy succeed. • If transformational leadership is used employees can be focused and follow targets which mean DCE can achieve their goals of brand identity and higher revenue increasing profits however, this also means that if employees underperform they will get punished which may create a culture of demotivated employees lowering performance and this was a concern of Carl's • Daniel can also help Carl achieve his goal in the marketing strategy which means that DCE will understand customers well and utilise their USP giving them a competitive advantage increasing revenue and profits. However, this will cost the business a lot of money and thus can reduce profit. • Contingency leadership may work for DCE as it adapts to different situations and allows different approaches which means employees can have a varied environment that will support different types of employees thus increasing motivation, better services and higher revenue. • The market research has shown that DCE can help students in many ways such as self-confidence and revision. This will boost the company's main business of teaching, and this will lead to word of mouth which will increase customers and profits. However, this depends on the coaching skills provided to students and how they respond to the tools. **AO4 Evaluation** (N1 and N2 and N3). Evaluation will depend upon which element/s that have been discussed previously. • Judgement on whether transformational leadership theory will be helpful in the success of DCE in this business context • Whether this is dependent on different factors,. • Transformational leadership will allow every member of the business to be challenged with a new culture concentrating on needs of employees especially as a service business this leads to better customer service allowing to achieve the new objectives of maintaining a strong brand identity and 10% increase in revenue. • Transformational leadership is very important to the success of DCE as if good decisions were made, such as how to fund the business, and add value to the current products or develop new services then DCE would be able to gain revenue again and achieve its new goals. Furthermore this will allow DCE to beat the incoming competition and gain back lost customers, revenue and profits. However, this depends on how Carl responds to the leadership style along with the employees.	

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Question	Answer	Marks
2	• Transformational leadership is not important to the success of DCE as there are other factors that DCE need to address here to make sure that the objectives are achieved. They need to ensure that the force field analysis is explored correctly along with other strategy analyses to ensure that all factors have been discovered such as technological, social etc. This will ensure the success of DCE allowing revenues to increase again. However, this depends on how research is made and the accuracy of the information gained along with the implementation. Accept all valid responses.	

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