



Coimisiún na Scrúduithe Stáit
State Examinations Commission

Junior Cycle Examination 2019

Business Studies

Chief Examiner's Report

Contents

- 1. Introduction 3
- 2. What does the examination test? 3
- 3. How well did the 2019 candidates achieve the objectives of the course,
and how do we know? 4
- 4. What can current and future students and their teachers learn from this?..... 6
- Appendix: statistics and trends 8

1. Introduction

This Chief Examiner's report provides a review of the performance of candidates in the Junior Cycle Business Studies examination, 2019. It provides an analysis of candidate achievement at common level for the written examination. Tables of relevant statistical information are given in an appendix at the end. The report should be read in conjunction with the examination paper, the published marking scheme and the specification for this subject. The examination paper and marking scheme are available on the State Examinations Commission's website www.examinations.ie. The specification is available at www.curriculumonline.ie.

The new Junior Cycle Business Studies specification was first examined in 2019. The stated aim of this specification is as follows:

Business Studies aims to stimulate students' interest in the business environment and how they interact with it. It develops skills, knowledge, attitudes and behaviours that allow them to make informed and responsible decisions with all of the resources available to them, ensuring their and society's well-being, while becoming more self-aware as learners.

Junior Cycle Business Studies Specification

2. What does the examination test?

2.1 Written Paper

The examination, at common level, comprises a 2-hour written examination paper which is designed to assess the extent to which candidates have achieved the objectives of the specification as determined by the learning outcomes. There are 270 marks available for the written examination paper. Candidates are required to engage with, demonstrate comprehension of, and provide written responses to stimulus material. In any year, the learning outcomes assessed will constitute a sample of the relevant learning outcomes from the tables of learning outcomes. There are 37 learning outcomes in total which range across three strands, Personal Finance, Enterprise and Our Economy. These three strands are interconnected by three elements, Managing My Resources, Exploring Business and Using Skills for Business. The examination paper reflects the interconnected nature of the specification.

2.2 Assessment Task

The assessment task is submitted to the State Examinations Commission during the course of Year 3 of the programme. It is worth 30 marks (10% of the total marks) and is based on Classroom Based Assessment 2, a presentation. Candidates are assessed on:

- Their ability to evaluate new knowledge or understanding that has emerged through their experience of the presentation.
- Their capacity to reflect on the skills they have developed, and to apply them to unfamiliar situations.
- Their ability to reflect on how their value system has been influenced through the experience of the presentation.

3. How well did the 2019 candidates achieve the objectives of the course, and how do we know?

The 2019 candidates' engagement with and achievement of the objectives of the specification are considered in turn below. Commentary is based on an analysis of candidates' responses to specific questions or sections on the written examination and the assessment task. The commentary below is based on feedback provided by examiners in their final reports and systematically collated by senior members of the examining team and the Chief Examiner.

3.1 Written Examination Paper

Candidates demonstrated high levels of engagement with the learning outcomes over a range of questions in Section A. Examiners reported that the format used in some questions was inviting and accessible to all candidates, which was an important element of a common level paper. Section B questions demonstrate the integrated nature of the specification ranging over the three strands throughout.

Examiners commented that the examination paper was fair and suited to common level. It provided challenges for higher ability candidates and was accessible to lower ability candidates with a good balance of higher and lower order questions.

In question 1 (i) candidates engaged very well with the graph provided and were able to identify and classify sources of income as required by learning outcome 1.2. Part (ii) proved challenging as it required analysis of the information provided. Some candidates struggled to provide clear and coherent advice as required by the question.

The specification requires candidates to engage with stimulus material. Some candidates did not do this in question 4 when examining the factors affecting the cost of car insurance. Careful engagement with this material could have resulted in better answers for these candidates.

Learning outcome 3.7 requires an understanding of globalisation in the context of international trade. In question 2, candidates demonstrated a very clear understanding of the implications of the globalisation of trade to a very high level fulfilling the requirements of this learning outcome.

Candidates struggled with the reasons for preparing a business plan (learning outcome 2.9). There was some evidence to suggest that candidates had misread the requirements of the question and produced some rote learned answers. Very few candidates earned the full 6 marks for this question.

One of the key skills of Junior Cycle Business is numeracy. There was strong evidence of high numeracy levels in question 5, covering learning outcome 2.10, completing key business documents. There was further evidence of high numeracy levels in question 9 (i), when calculating Ireland's balance of trade. In the payslip in question 18 (b) candidates again showed high levels of numeracy in the completion of the payslip but the majority were unable to deal successfully with the tax credit. Learning outcome 1.11 requires that students should be able to calculate personal tax liability.

There was excellent understanding of the basic economic concept of supply and demand in question 16 (a) (i), (ii), and (iii). Candidates clearly evaluated changes in supply and demand as required by learning outcome 3.2. There was further good analysis of the factors affecting the demand for goods in question 16 (a) (iv) which was completed to a high level by the majority of candidates, although some were unable to identify the correct effect of an Eason's store opening.

There was evidence of a high level of engagement with the ethical consumer in question 16 (b) (ii) with candidates providing a wide variety of high quality responses as required by learning outcome 1.9.

Candidates engaged with learning outcome 2.3 showing excellent knowledge of the difference between work and volunteering in question 18 (a). Excellent analysis of examples of the benefits of being a volunteer were provided, with many candidates drawing on personal experiences to explain their answers.

The most challenging learning outcome for candidates was 2.12 with the majority failing to fully complete question 17. Most were able to prepare an analysed cash book but were unable to complete balances. Posting to relevant ledger accounts was omitted entirely by many candidates with a consequential loss of marks. This was disappointing as a similar question appeared on the sample paper.

Candidates engaged well with learning outcome 2.5 in question 17 (b) (i) which requires an investigation of the positive and negative impacts on a community of an organisation from an economic, social, and environmental perspective. There was a tendency to focus on just the economic impacts e.g. providing employment, with no reference to the others.

A key skill in the Junior Cycle Business Studies specification is managing information and thinking. This requires candidates to be able to produce and interpret graphs and charts. Examiners reported that many read the graph on economic indicators, in question 18 (c) (i) incorrectly and consequently provided incorrect answers.

3.2 Assessment Task

- The majority of candidates demonstrated excellent ability in evaluating new knowledge and understanding as seen in the wide variety of engaging topics relevant to the business environment. In a small number of cases it was evident that candidates had selected topics they could not relate to and struggled to display knowledge and understanding as required, losing marks as a result.
- Responses showed basic levels of reflection on the development of communications skills or the use of support materials in a significant number of cases. There were poorly structured answers using bulleted lists rather than writing a reflection on the development of skills.
- Candidates performed better when reflecting on how the experience of their presentation influenced their value system particularly in the areas of business ethics, fair trade and sustainable business practice.

4. What can current and future students and their teachers learn from this?

During the learning:

- Teachers and students should cover the entire specification. This is essential as there is no choice on the examination paper.
- Teachers should use the support resources provided by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment and the Junior Cycle for Teachers Business Studies Team. These resources have been specifically developed to encourage the type of learning envisaged in the Business Studies specification.
- Teachers should provide opportunities for students to develop effective time management. Students should be given guidance as to the approximate time allocation for each section.
- Students should get into the habit of showing all supporting work as this allows them to check back for errors and mistakes and helps to ensure accuracy.
- Teachers should provide frequent opportunities for students to gain competence in the bookkeeping elements of the specification through regular practice and feedback. Bookkeeping is very suitable for peer assessment and self-assessment in a classroom context.
- Teachers should provide opportunities for students to apply the skills and knowledge across the strands of the specification. It is essential to be aware of the links between all strands rather than focusing on a single strand during learning.
- Students need to practise drawing accurate graphs but they also need to be able to interpret and analyse any graphs provided. There should be ample opportunities to do this as these skills are also part of studying other subjects such as maths.
- Teachers should provide opportunities for students to investigate local businesses and their impact on their community.
- It is very important for both teachers and students to realise the importance of the outcome verbs when answering examination questions. Some examiners recommended the use of the BUG approach in the classroom as follows:
 - B = box the outcome verbs in the question
 - U = underline the key words in the question
 - G = glance back over the question to ensure understanding
- Teachers should take the time to familiarise themselves with the Guidelines for the Classroom-based Assessments and Assessment Task, available on www.curriculumonline.ie. These guidelines will also help to avoid any confusion about the implementation of the Assessment Task. It is important to utilise the first stage of discussion and reflection to allow students time to critically reflect on their individual presentations. Teachers should also be familiar with the circular issued by the SEC which

provides guidelines for completing the Assessment Task. This circular is available on www.examinations.ie.

Prior to and during the examination:

- Candidates should be familiar with the sample examination paper and the 2019 examination paper, marking scheme and sample solutions, which are available on the SEC website www.examinations.ie.
- Candidates should ensure that all parts of the specification are fully covered in their preparations for the examination. Attempting to predict the examination paper and omitting elements of the specification is a risky strategy and may lead to lower final grades.
- Candidates should continue to develop and practise examination technique, using sample solutions to practise and become familiar with the required techniques and terminology associated with the examination.
- Candidates should carefully read and follow all instructions on the examination paper as it will be marked onscreen. Candidates should read the full examination paper at the start of the examination, before attempting any questions. Each question should be read and all instructions followed carefully. The full allocation of time allowed for the examination should be used. It is important to look at the space provided for answers and use this as a guide when answering questions.
- Candidates should show all of their work as marks can be earned for partially correct answers.
- Candidates should make sure they understand the meaning of the 'outcome verbs' used on the examination paper. For example, take the time to provide detailed answers in response to question cues such as 'distinguish' or 'explain', which require more development than instructions like 'state' or 'outline'.

Appendix: statistics and trends

Participation trends

Year	<i>Business Studies</i> candidature	Total Junior Cycle candidature*	<i>Business Studies</i> as % of total
2019	36268	64330	56%

Table 1: participation in Junior Cycle *Business Studies*, 2019

Year	<i>Business Studies</i> candidature	Female Candidates	Male Candidates	Female as % of total	Male as % of total
2019	36268	17591	18677	48.5%	51.5%

Table 2: gender composition of subject cohort, 2019

Overall performance of candidates

Junior Cycle *Business Studies* was examined for the first time in 2019, using the grading scale for Junior Cycle examinations introduced in 2017. Direct comparison with all aspects of the grade distributions from previous years is not possible. For this reason, only comparative data from 2019 are presented in the tables below.

Year	Total	Distinction	Higher Merit	Merit	Achieved	Partially Achieved	Not Graded
2019	36268	1.8	27.3	49.0	15.5	13.0	0.5

Table 3: Percentage of candidates awarded each grade in *Business Studies* at Common level, 2019

Year	Total	Distinction	Higher Merit	Merit	Achieved	Partially Achieved	Not Graded
2019	17591	2.6	32.1	50.9	16.9	7.4	0.4

Table 4: Percentage of female candidates awarded each grade in *Business Studies* at Common level, 2019

Year	Total	Distinction	Higher Merit	Merit	Achieved	Partially Achieved	Not Graded
2019	18677	1.1	22.7	45.9	13.9	5.1	0.9

Table 5: Percentage of male candidates awarded each grade in *Business Studies* at Higher level, 2019

Engagement with and performance on individual questions

The data in tables 11 and 12 are based on an analysis of a random selection of scripts.

Question	Average mark, out of question total (and as %)	Rank order in average mark as %	Topic
1	4.9 (81.7%)	6	Budgeting
2	5.5 (91.7%)	2	Globalisation
3	2.9 (48.3%)	16	Sources of finance
4	3.7 (61.7%)	12	Insurance
5	5.3 (88.3%)	4	Invoice
6	3.5 (58.3%)	13	Marketing mix
7	5.4 (90.0%)	3	Types of enterprise
8	2.3 (38.3%)	17	EU membership
9	4.4 (73.3%)	9	International trade
10	3.4 (56.7%)	15	Factors of production/entrepreneur
11	1.5 (25.0%)	18	Business plan
12	5.0 (83.3%)	5	Sources of income
13	4.7 (78.3%)	8	Government expenditure
14	4.8 (80.0%)	7	Trading account
15	6.0 (100.0%)	1	Needs and wants
16	34.6 (57.7%)	14	Supply and demand; technology in business; consumer rights when shopping online; ethical consumer; contactless transactions
17	37.2 (62.0%)	11	Double entry bookkeeping; impact of business on local area; VAT; corporation tax
18	38.5 (64.2%)	10	Volunteering and employment; rights and responsibilities of employer; payslip; economic indicators

Table 6: average mark for each question in the written examination paper, Common Level *Business Studies*

Question	Average mark, out of question total (and as %)	Rank order in average mark as %	Topic
1	8.2 (82%)	1	Overview and importance of new knowledge
2	6.5 (65%)	3	Development of communication skills or use of support materials to support effective communication
3	7.0 (70%)	2	Change in perspective or description of ways to improve presentation

Table 7: average mark for each question in the Assessment Task, Common Level *Business Studies*