



HERIOT-WATT MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME

STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT - STAGE 3

EXAMINER'S REPORT – DIET: JUNE 2009

Overall Comments (to be supplied by each examiner)

The general results from this examination appear to be satisfactory, although a smaller proportion of students than one might have expected gained Grade As and there were quite a number of failures. None of the individual questions appeared to stand out as giving candidates particular difficulties, although there is some comment below in this respect regarding Question C2.

General Comments: Section A

This section was generally well done. With regard to part (a) candidates generally produced an accurate relevant diagram – albeit with the axes the wrong way round on occasions - although the standard of rationale provided varied somewhat. Although I entirely concur with the answer guidance given in respect of part (b), I was fairly forgiving in respect of the detailed assessment by candidates of each of the individual Five Forces, my view being that Porter's model is a vehicle for analysis and discussion rather than a 'scientific' tool. However, I was more strict with regard to the requirement in part (c) for the evaluation to be "based on the five forces analysis undertaken for Question (b)". Students therefore generally scored fewer marks here than they might have expected.

General Comments: Section B

Again, candidates generally did well across this four-section question. My only slight difficulty was with using whole numbers in marking the individual sections. I spent more time than anticipated in marking the answers to those sections that attracted low maximum possible marks, seeking to avoid at the lower end penalising individual students and at the upper end generally allowing the marks to drift up. Perhaps because of its greater length, section (d) differentiated quite strongly among students, as I looked for a good standard of analysis in this area.

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| General Comments: Section C |
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| <p>Those candidates who chose Question C1 generally did well in both parts, and it is clear that the core reading material and the teaching prepares students well in this area.</p> |
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| <p>By contrast, a recognisable proportion of those candidates who chose Question C2 did less well because they confused a discussion on business ethics with more general consideration of cultural or even political issues facing international businesses. The problem was confounded by repeating the mistake across the whole of this question. In order to double check in this area I returned to the underlying core reading material and found that there was entirely adequate material for the candidates to have been aware of in the specified area of business ethics.</p> |
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