Examiner's Report

Exam Name and Code: Business and Digital Strategy

Date of exam - 19 May 2026

Paper performance overview - what worked well with candidates and areas that they were weak on, how they responded.
Candidates generally demonstrated a strong grasp of foundational data manipulations and practical business management principles. Performance in Question 1 was stronger, whereas in Question 2, a lack of technical knowledge of risk analysis areas and time pressure resulted in low average scores. The vast majority of candidates structured their responses well and made use of headings and subheadings in line with question requirements. While most candidates could perform calculations with sufficient accuracy, many struggled when required to interpret the results of these calculations. Candidates are reminded that writing generic statements or simply copying information from the scenario will not gain marks.
Question 1.1 performance (include each syllabus area covered)
Syllabus areas :1.g, 3.n Stronger candidates read the scenario carefully and demonstrated a well-rounded understanding of the key areas of strategic impact, addressing a wide range of issues. Weaker candidates wasted critical time discussing theoretical frameworks such as Ansoff's matrix, or merely summarising the scenario facts without adding value. Better answers clearly cited benefits, such as cost reductions across both labour and energy, alongside a reduction in peak-season bottlenecks. Some also appropriately recognised the benefit of improved compliance with health and safety standards. While efficiency and speed of dispatch to customers were also commonly discussed, there was evidence of confusion as to whether the high-street retailers are customers or suppliers of Orbital Logistics.

Question 1.2 performance (include each syllabus area covered)
Syllabus areas: 2.k, 2.g, 3.m Better responses utilised a structured data table to reference their calculations clearly. A high number of candidates successfully performed some of the components of the annual net saving calculations, however a notable portion omitted the final step of actually calculating the net savings, focusing instead entirely on the differences in individual costs. Weaker answers failed to factor in the total number of orders or the total number of distribution centres. Some candidates wasted valuable time writing explanations in this section; the requirement explicitly stated that no discussion was required. Many answers failed to discuss the costs associated with errors, despite acknowledging elsewhere in the scripts that managing customer returns and resolving complaints invariably incurs costs. While many candidates made references to the "4Vs" framework of Big Data, they struggled to explicitly link these technical characteristics to how these contribute to a competitive advantage for Orbital Logistics.
Question 1.3 performance (include each syllabus area covered)
Syllabus area: 2.e Energy savings and the transition away from LPG forklifts were widely discussed. However, candidates generally struggled to evaluate the issue of embedded carbon. Only the strongest scripts successfully identified the complex trade-off between an immediate, short-term carbon spike associated with the manufacturing of the robots and the long-term emissions reductions due to greater efficiency within Orbital Logistics. The requirement to recommend two other technologies produced mixed results; some candidates failed to suggest any technologies at all or were unable to name a distinct technology solution. Artificial Intelligence (AI) and machine learning applications for organising complex logistics were popular responses. However, weaker candidates incorrectly put forward suggestions such as conducting an employee survey, which is a management tool rather than a digital technology solution.
Question 1.4 performance (include each syllabus area covered)
Syllabus area: 4.a A significant number of candidates struggled to distinguish between the roles of a Chief Operating Officer (COO) and a Chief Executive Officer (CEO). Weaker scripts threw a collection of vocabulary at the problem, often making unsubstantiated allegations of bribery where no such evidence existed in the scenario. The ethical breaches centred on Mark’s lack of integrity, objectivity, and professional behaviour in drafting restrictive procurement criteria. Time was wasted discussing the broader commercial dimensions of the scenario—such as the operational disruptions to the warehouse if an inappropriate supplier was selected—which fell outside the scope of the ethical requirement. Additionally, candidates failed to recognise

that an initial compliance check had already been undertaken, leading them to recommend repeating the exercise.

Candidates are reminded that they must explicitly justify their actions rather than merely stating that, for example, it is important to be transparent.

Question 2.1 performance (include each syllabus area covered)

Syllabus area: 4.a

Many candidates failed to recognise that comparing Method A and Method B required adjusting for different volumes, thus considering cost per unit would make the results more comparable than looking at total costs. Furthermore, because the scenario provided no pricing information, any attempt at discussing revenue impacts scored zero marks.

The requirement also asked to "comment briefly" indicating that only a limited number of marks were allocated to the narrative section. Restating figures from their calculations would not score additional marks, better candidates provided an explanation of which method was cheaper, why it was cheaper, as well as what the Net Promoter Scores implied about consumer sentiment.

Question 2.2 performance (include each syllabus area covered)

Syllabus areas: 1.a, 2.c, 3.l

Answers to this requirement were sometimes disappointing. Discussion of the reliability of the results often focused on the size of the sample and the impact of seasonality. Simply stating that a single question is not sufficient to establish customer sentiment did not score marks.

The requirement to evaluate the financial success of the business model of a circular business was often misunderstood, with many candidates focusing on revenue generation rather than the importance of increasing the rate of return of the containers as these are a significant cost to the business.

Some confusion was evident when calculating the coefficient of variation with weaker students being unfamiliar with the correct formulae and thus producing figures that were difficult to interpret. Stronger students linked deposit payments and RFID tags to cost per stop and stop duration rather than just discussing customer reaction to the introduction of these measures.

There was some evidence of time pressure in this requirement.

Question 2.3 performance (include each syllabus area covered)
Syllabus area: 3.d Candidates are cautioned against dropping in theoretical knowledge without direct relevance to the requirements, such as discussing Lynch's model rather than specific types of strategic partnerships outlined in the scenario. Some confusion regarding the nature of the commercial relationship was evident; candidates routinely failed to identify who the franchisee and franchisor would be, or overlooked the fact that GreenPlate would be providing the license *to* Caledonian Kits rather than the other way around. Some evidence of time pressure was noted across in the final requirement.
Summary and helpful hints
The Business and Digital Strategy (BDS) paper evaluates a candidate's ability to function as a strategic advisor. The highest-scoring scripts demonstrated the ability to seamlessly blend quantitative data analytics with commercial and ethical realism. In contrast, weaker submissions tended to treat financial data manipulation and strategic narrative as isolated exercises rather than integrated analytical tools. Candidates are reminded of the importance of reading the question requirements carefully. Stronger candidates targeted each sub-headings of the question to construct a clear flow of narrative. Weaker candidates, however, provided discussions or summaries that held little relevance to the requirements and consequently earned no marks. Time management remains a key factor to exam success. The most successful candidates demonstrated exam discipline, allocating their time strictly in proportion to the marks available for each question. Conversely, weaker candidates tended to over-elaborate on initial requirements in their answers, thus compromising their ability to do justice to the later requirements of the paper. In terms of the numerical aspects of the paper, the best responses set out calculations in a clearly structured table at the front of their answers which can be easily followed and cross-referenced with the subsequent analysis. Candidates must recognise that computations are merely the foundation of a BDS exam; marks are mostly generated by interpreting why a metric has moved and evaluating what the change implies for the organisation's future developments.