CAMBRIDGE
International Education

Cambridge International AS & A Level

BUSINESS **9609/43**

Paper 4 Business Strategy **May/June 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 May/June 2025 series for most Cambridge IGCSE, Cambridge International A and AS Level components, and some Cambridge O Level components.

© Cambridge University Press & Assessment 2025

PUBLISHED

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.

© Cambridge University Press & Assessment 2025

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.

© Cambridge University Press & Assessment 2025

PUBLISHED

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).

© Cambridge University Press & Assessment 2025

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.

© Cambridge University Press & Assessment 2025

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 standardisation 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
	For objective points that are correct.
	For objective points that are wrong.
 and TV	When the candidate has attempted something, but the mark/skill has not been awarded.
Highlighter	To highlight a point or section of an answer that justifies the mark/annotation.
BOD	When the candidate has attempted something, and the mark/skill has been awarded.
NUT	When the context has not been used.
SEEN	To show a page/section has been seen/read.
NAQ	When the response is not focussed on answering the question.
REP	The repetition of a previous point in a response **or** candidate is copying the case study/data.

© Cambridge University Press & Assessment 2025

Annotation	Meaning
OFR	The own figure rule applies – acts as a mark/tick.
K	When limited knowledge (AO1) has been awarded.
DEV	When developed knowledge (AO1) has been awarded.
APP	When AO2 has been awarded. Number of APPs should match the mark awarded.
A1	When AO3 at Level 1 has been awarded.
A2	When AO3 at Level 2 has been awarded.
A3	When AO3 at Level 3 has been awarded.
N1	When AO4 at Level 1 has been awarded.
N2	When AO4 at Level 2 has been awarded.
N3	When AO4 at Level 3 has been awarded.

© Cambridge University Press & Assessment 2025

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.

© Cambridge University Press & Assessment 2025

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.

Every page of a script must have at least one annotation e.g. <BP> for a blank page

© Cambridge University Press & Assessment 2025

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.

© Cambridge University Press & Assessment 2025

<table>
<tr><th>Question</th><th>Answer</th><th>Marks</th></tr>
<tr><td>1</td><td>

Evaluate how significant Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) was to CH's operations strategy between 2019 and 2024.

Indicative content
Responses may include:

AO1 Knowledge and understanding

Knowledge [K] (max 1 mark) can be awarded for **knowledge about Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP)**, including:
- Enterprise Resource Planning **Software**
- Costing/Pricing
- Employee relations
- Inventory control
- Capacity management

<table>
<tr><td>ERP Software [K]</td><td>Some basic knowledge about operations strategy, so only K.</td></tr>
<tr><td>ERP software [K], can be used to control elements of the operations in a business [DEV].</td><td>1 K for identification and 1 DEV for a point of explanation.</td></tr>
<tr><td>ERP software [K], can be used to control elements of the operations in a business [DEV], such as ordering new inventory [DEV].</td><td>1 K for identification and 2 DEVs for two points of explanation.</td></tr>
</table>

Note: Candidates can gain full marks for AO1 from one term that is explained ([K]+[DEV]+[DEV]) or from two terms partially explained ([K]+[DEV] and [K]+[DEV]).

</td><td>20</td></tr>
</table>

Question	Answer	Marks
1	**AO2 Application** Application APP (max 2 marks) can be awarded for **applying knowledge, analysis or evaluation of ERP** to CH, including: • Move to a larger factory – harder to manage • ERP used to manage capacity • Capacity remains fairly constant – Between 80–90% • Inventory control has been poor – Manuka honey has been out of stock three times – two occasions have been out for over a week • It has taken 15 weeks to get it right with stock management of manuka honey • Trade union involvement with staff scheduling issues • Urgent meeting has been requested • Cost/price decisions have been easier • Dynamic pricing • Identification of economies of scale opportunities.	

© Cambridge University Press & Assessment 2025

Question	Answer	Marks
1	**AO3 Analysis** Analysis is likely to be based on how ERP has helped operations strategy in CH (A1 and A2 and A3) , including: • ERP has improved the relationship with customers and allowed them to send data between businesses to meet their needs and CH production levels. • Better capacity management should have led to better working capital management, better resource management and less waste (lean production). • CH has been able to use ERP with smaller and larger customers to ensure their products are still supplied in variety of stores. • Capacity has been at a manageable level – 90% – allowing time for maintenance and good average costs. • Inventory management is poor. • Regular inventory out could lead to loss of orders and/or customers and market share as a result. • This chart is just for manuka honey, is the software causing problems across all imported products? • Regular use of buffer inventory makes it hard to expand the business and look for new customers/orders. • Are buffer inventory and max inventory set at the right levels? • Software scheduling is demotivating staff – could affect production levels and ability to meet customer orders. • Unhappy staff may hurt retention rates/labour turnover if staff leave. • Staff leaving will add to CH's recruitment and training costs as new employees needed. • ERP has helped collect cost/price data for energy gels, making decisions quicker and speeding up the development of the product. • The software has been working, pulling data from across the organisation for managers to use. • In general ERP software has been working to draw data down for decision making purposes. Capacity, costing and pricing functions are doing well. • In general ERP software is NOT working properly. Stock and staffing have not been managed well leading to costs increasing in these areas. *Candidates need to identify an element of ERP and provide developed analysis to get to L2, this then needs to be counterbalanced to get to L3. If a candidate does this twice, they will gain 8 marks*.	

© Cambridge University Press & Assessment 2025

Question	Answer	Marks
1	**AO4 Evaluation** Evaluation (N1 and N2 and N3) Evaluation will largely depend on the points raised in the analysis. *Candidates MUST answer the question – how significant ERP was to CT's operations strategy between 2019 and 2024. The development and support of this judgement will help them to move through L2 and L3.* *To award L3 the answer must be in context and draw upon the previous analysis.* • The ERP software has worked when managing the capacity of the production lines. The 90% (max) capacity has enabled CH to have time for maintenance and fluctuations in demand so that it can meet the needs of its customers. • This will also have influenced costs, possibly bringing down average costs for CH and helping them increase profit margins. • The inventory management has been poor. Customers will have been disappointed two or three times in the last four months – this could lead to them finding alternative suppliers and loss of market share for CH. • It is possible that the problem is not ERP related and that the supplier of Manuka honey has had issues, therefore does CH need to find more reliable suppliers – this could prove costly. • The human resource problems are related to the ERP software but how much could they have been over-ridden by management? Are management relying too much on the software to do their job? • If this is true, are there possible diseconomies of scale appearing now CH has got so big and is relying on software to pick up the slack in decision making? • What could be the result of the meeting? Could HR be removed from ERP? Is this possible? • If this continues, how much will staffing levels be affected? Will people leave and need replacing? This could all add to the business' costs. • The Energy gels development seems to have been an ERP success, using the costing and pricing data effectively. This keeps down average costs and ensures the new product is profitable. Overall success will depend on the analysis and evaluation provided by the candidate. • It has been successful in some areas (capacity and costing/pricing) while other areas less so (stock management and HR). Impact on operations may have been more favourable as the stock management is now sorted after 4 months/16 weeks. • Is there really an argument to get rid of the ERP? What are the alternatives?	

© Cambridge University Press & Assessment 2025

<table>
<tr><th>Question</th><th>Answer</th><th>Marks</th></tr>
<tr><td>1</td><td>
<table>
<tr><td>No credit</td><td>L1 N1 including: (limited supporting evidence)</td><td>L2 N2 including: (developed supporting evidence)</td><td>L3 N3 including: (developed supporting evidence with context)</td></tr>
<tr><td>The ERP has worked for CH.</td><td>The ERP has worked for CH, as the capacity in the factory has improved.</td><td>The ERP has worked for CH, as the capacity in the factory has improved. This will help with productivity and efficiency in the factory.</td><td>The ERP has worked for CH, as the capacity in the factory has improved from 80% to 90%. This will help with productivity and efficiency in the factory.</td></tr>
<tr><td>The ERP has not helped CH.</td><td>The ERP has not helped CH. The human resource management has been poor.</td><td>The ERP has not helped CH. The human resource management has been poor. This is an important part of ERP as the workers keep the systems running.</td><td>The ERP has not helped CH. The human resource management has been poor. The scheduling has led to demotivated employees affecting the costs and productivity of CH. This is an important part of ERP as the workers keep the systems running.</td></tr>
</table>
Accept all valid responses.
</td><td></td></tr>
</table>

© Cambridge University Press & Assessment 2025

<table>
<tr><th>Question</th><th>Answer</th><th>Marks</th></tr>
<tr><td>2</td><td>

Advise CH on the best approach to develop a future business strategy.

Indicative content

Knowledge [K] (max 1 mark) can be awarded for any **relevant business knowledge about an approach** to develop business strategy, including:

AO1 Knowledge and understanding

- The purpose of business strategy
- The meaning and purpose of strategic management
- Alternative approaches to develop business strategy, including:
  - Blue ocean strategy
  - Scenario planning
  - Ansoff's matrix
  - SWOT analysis
  - PEST analysis
  - Porter's five forces
  - Core competence framework
  - Force field analysis
  - Decision trees
  - Boston matrix

Award [DEV] for any explanation of an approach that *could* be used to develop business strategy, up to a max of 2 marks.

<table>
<tr><td>SWOT [K]</td><td>Some basic knowledge about an approach, so only K.</td></tr>
<tr><td>SWOT [K], can be used to identify the internal and external force [DEV].</td><td>1 K for identification and 1 DEV for a point of explanation.</td></tr>
<tr><td>SWOT [K], can be used to identify the internal and external force [DEV] to overcome its weakenesses with its opportunities [DEV].</td><td>1 K for identification and 2 DEVs for two points of explanation.</td></tr>
</table>

Note – Candidates can gain full marks for AO1 from one term that is explained ([K]+[DEV]+[DEV]) or from two terms partially explained ([K]+[DEV] and [K]+[DEV]).

</td><td>20</td></tr>
</table>

© Cambridge University Press & Assessment 2025

Question	Answer	Marks
2	**AO2 Application** Application APP (max 2 marks) can be awarded for **applying knowledge, analysis or evaluation of an approach to develop business strategy,** to QA between 2021 and 2024. *Candidates MUST apply this to CH's business model – a lot of this will come from the appendices.* • Wants to grow the business • Expand operations into other honey products • Increasing sales of existing products • CH is now a very large business with a factory and import business • Traditional approach sees CH working with other beekeepers as suppliers • Would be going back to the roots of the business and may find a new market • Any element of the case study • Any element of the appendices.	

© Cambridge University Press & Assessment 2025

Question	Answer	Marks
2	**AO3 Analysis** Analysis is likely to be based on the impact of the approaches used to develop a business strategy for CH (A1 and A2 and A3), including: Candidates can choose the approach/s that they want to suggest for CH – analysis will be based on which method/s chosen • Blue Ocean Strategy – this could refocus them on what they did well at the start of CH and get them back to their uniqueness and find them a niche market while their mass-produced honey continues for national retailers. • Scenario planning could be used to plan out the new strategy and compare to the existing strategy to understand the immediate impact on the future of CH. • Ansoff's matrix would get them to think of four possible strategies – product development, market development, market penetration and diversification, which would help them evaluate all the options to CH and which are more achievable. • SWOT analysis will enable them to identify the internal and external influences that CH could take advantage of to move the company forward so that they do not lose market share and/or see costs rise. The threats would need more consideration. • PEST analysis only focuses on the external environment – may not give them the info they need for the future development of the firm. • Porter's five forces – will give an idea of current bargaining power in the market but may have limited use moving forward – CH is a big business now so will have power over its smaller suppliers. • Core competencies – this could focus CH where it needs to be as it looks at what it does/did best which could prove useful when looking back to where it started and how that model worked. • Force field analysis – would help CH to identify the driving/restraining forces involved in honey product and whether this would give CH the returns it desires. • Decision trees could get Emilio/CH to look at all the possible decision outcomes and assign probabilities/values to them to help make the decision, but Emilio will need to come up with possible branches to compare first so only good for the initial assessment of whether to move forward. *Candidates may choose to contrast two or more of these methods, but they must analyse the method in the context of the best approach to develop the future strategy and not just provide an analysis of the method on its own.* *Candidates need to identify an approach and provide developed analysis to get to L2, this then needs to be counterbalanced to get to L3. If a candidate does this twice, they will gain 8 marks.*	

© Cambridge University Press & Assessment 2025

<table>
<tr><th>Question</th><th>Answer</th><th>Marks</th></tr>
<tr><td>2</td><td>

AO4 Evaluation

Evaluation (N1 and N2 and N3), including:

Evaluation will largely depend on the points raised in the analysis.

Candidates MUST answer the question – which ONE approach is going to help develop a new strategy. The development and support of this judgement will help them to move through L2 and L3.

To award L3, the answer must be in context and draw upon the previous analysis.

Evaluation will largely depend on the points raised in the analysis of the approaches needed to develop the new strategy.

- Each option requires much more data and research to understand the risk, financial constraints and success probabilities to help make the final decision.
- How important are Emilio's feelings about the business moving away from its roots compared to what may be correct from a quantitative point of view?
- Is this strategy right for the company? Is it Emilio just feeling nostalgic for the old business – could he leave and do this himself?
- What are the main objectives? If it was market share, will this strategy really boost the market share of what is now a large business?
- Candidates must make a recommendation as to a suitable strategy approach from the list above.

Accept all valid responses.

<table>
<tr><th>No credit</th><th>L1 N1 including: (limited supporting evidence)</th><th>L2 N2 including: (developed supporting evidence)</th><th>L3 N3 including: (developed supporting evidence with context)</th></tr>
<tr><td>SWOT analysis is the best approach.</td><td>SWOT analysis is the best approach because it shows internal and external factors.</td><td>SWOT analysis is the best approach because it shows internal and external factors, unlike other approaches, like PEST, which only shows external factors.</td><td>SWOT analysis is the best approach because it shows internal data, like CH having 90% capacity and external factors, unlike other approaches, like PEST, which only shows external factors.</td></tr>
</table>

</td><td></td></tr>
</table>

© Cambridge University Press & Assessment 2025