



Course Outline

AL BUSINESS STUDIES

Year 13

Inspiring excellence, empowering global minds

Syllabus overview Aims.

The aims are to enable students to:

- understand and appreciate the role of enterprise and the contribution of business to society - locally, nationally, and internationally
- develop critical understanding of business organisations, the markets they serve and the process of adding value
- evaluate business behaviour from the perspective of a range of stakeholders and consider their relative influence on business organisations
- develop an awareness of the political, economic, social, technological, legal, environmental, and ethical issues that influence or may be influenced by business activity
- apply quantitative, problem-solving, decision-making and communication skills
- develop skills and knowledge needed for further study or employment in business.

Learning Outcomes Overview

AS Business Studies syllabus:

- Business and its environment
- Human resource management
- Marketing
- Operations management

Ongoing Objectives

This A Level topic builds on the learning acquired in topic 1, enabling candidates to further understand the environment in which a business operates. All businesses operate in a constantly changing environment. Candidates will develop an understanding that although some aspects of the environment are fixed, businesses operate in a context in which things change. The way in which the topic is taught should reflect the changing needs of the environment in which a business operates. The study of business strategy will enable candidates to develop their skills to produce a basic business strategy. Candidates will develop an understanding of the tools a business uses to analyse the internal and external.

Unit Overview

Term 1

Unit 2 – Business strategy

Approximate length: 4 weeks

Business strategy refers to the long-term plan of action a business adopts to achieve its goals and objectives, ensuring competitive advantage and sustainability in the market. Business strategy encompasses the overall direction and scope of a company in the long run. It's about determining where a business should compete, how it can gain a competitive advantage, and how it will achieve its objectives. Effective strategy formulation and implementation are crucial for a business to thrive in a competitive environment and adapt to external changes.

Specific National Curriculum Objectives Covered:

Developing business strategy

- the meaning and purpose of business strategy
- the meaning and purpose of strategic management: analysis, choice, and implementation
- approaches to develop business strategy, including blue ocean strategy, scenario planning, SWOT analysis, PEST analysis, Porter's five forces, core competence framework, Ansoff matrix, force field analysis, decision trees, Corporate planning, and implementation.
- the meaning and importance of corporate planning
- the meaning of corporate culture and its impact on business decision-making
- the meaning and importance of transformational leadership
- the management and control of strategic change
- the meaning and importance of contingency planning and crisis management

Unit 3 – Organisational structure weeks

Approximate length: 4

This A Level topic builds on the learning acquired in topic 2, enabling candidates to build the bigger picture of managing a workforce. Candidates will develop an understanding of the different ways in which a business can structure its workforce to reach its goals. Candidates will learn about business leadership and the ability to make decisions. Candidates will develop an understanding that there are different ways to lead. The most suitable method will depend on the business, and its context. The study of strategic elements of human resource management will require candidates to bring together the content learnt in topic 2 and in this topic 7 to think about how a business can manage its people from a business wide perspective.

Specific National Curriculum Objectives Covered:

- the purpose and attributes of an organisational structure such as flexibility, meeting the needs of the business, allowing for growth and development, and encouraging intrapreneurship.
- Types of structure: functional, hierarchical (flat and narrow), matrix
- the advantages and disadvantages of the different types of structure
- why some organisations are structured by product and others by function or geographical area.
- the reasons and ways structures change e.g., due to growth or delayering.
- the features of a formal structure: levels of hierarchy, chain of command, span of control, responsibility, authority, delegation, accountability, centralised, decentralised.
- Delegation and accountability
- the relationship between delegation and accountability
- the processes of accountability in a business
- the impact of delegation on a business
- Control, authority, and trust
- the relationship between span of control and levels of hierarchy
- the difference between authority and responsibility
- the conflicts between control and trust that might arise when delegating.
- Centralization and decentralization
- the impact of centralization and decentralization on a business
- Line and staff
- examples of and distinctions between line and staff functions and the conflicts between them

Unit 4 – Business communication

Approximate length: 4 weeks

Business communication is a vital aspect of organizational functioning, affecting almost every facet of a company's operations. Effective communication promotes understanding, fosters teamwork, facilitates decision-making, and ensures alignment with the company's objectives. With the advent of technology, the methods and channels of communication have expanded, offering businesses multiple ways to connect and engage with both internal and external stakeholders.

Specific National Curriculum Objectives Covered:

- Purposes of communication
- situations in which communication is essential.
- Methods of communication
- the standard methods of communication used in business spoken, written, electronic, visual
- the strengths and weaknesses of the different methods of communication
- Channels of communication
- how communication works within a business
- the difference between one- and two-way communication; the difference between vertical and horizontal
- communication problems associated with different channels of communication.
- Barriers to communication, barriers to communication and how to overcome them.

- The role of management in facilitating communication
- the role of informal communications within a business
- ways in which communication can influence the efficiency of a business.
- ways of improving communication in each situation

Unit 5 - Leadership

Approximate length: 4 weeks

Leadership refers to the process of influencing, guiding, and directing the behaviors and attitudes of individuals or groups to achieve specific goals or objectives. Leadership is pivotal to the success of any organization. Effective leaders guide their teams towards the realization of goals, inspire commitment, shape organizational culture, and navigate challenges. The best leaders are adaptive, recognizing the need to change their leadership styles based on situations and individual team members. Embracing emotional intelligence can further enhance a leader's capability to connect with and influence their teams.

Specific National Curriculum Objectives Covered:

- Leadership and the purpose of leadership
- leadership roles in business (directors, managers, supervisors, worker representatives)
- the qualities of a good leader
- Theories of leadership and key leadership theories: trait, behavioral, contingency, power, and influence and transformational
- Emotional intelligence/emotional quotient (EQ)
- Goleman's four competencies of emotional intelligence: self-awareness, social awareness, self-management, and social skills.

Unit 6 - Human resource management (HRM) strategy

Approximate length: 4 weeks

HRM strategy refers to the systematic planning and coordination of human resource activities, policies, and practices to achieve organizational objectives and ensure the best use of human capital. HRM strategy is integral to organizational success, as it directly impacts the motivation, skills, and performance of the workforce. Effective HRM strategies align with the broader business objectives and are adaptive to changes in the external environment. With the increasing importance of technology, HRM also needs to stay updated with digital tools and platforms that can streamline processes and enhance overall efficiency.

Specific National Curriculum Objectives Covered:

- the difference between 'hard' and 'soft' HRM
- flexible working contracts: advantages and disadvantages of temporary contracts or flexible contracts
- including zero hours contracts, part-time, full-time, annualized hours, flextime, home working, shift, working, job sharing, compressed working hours, the gig economy.
- the measurement, causes and consequences of poor employee performance.
- strategies for improving employee performance.
- Management by Objectives (MBO) - implementation and usefulness
- the changing role of Information Technology (IT) and Artificial Intelligence (AI) in HRM

Unit 7 - Marketing analysis**Approximate length: 4 weeks**

Marketing analysis involves examining various factors, both internal and external to an organization, to understand market conditions, identify opportunities, and shape marketing strategies. Marketing analysis is essential for businesses to navigate the competitive landscape, understand consumers, and develop effective strategies. It encompasses a wide range of tools and methodologies to scrutinize both the internal dynamics of a business and the external environment in which it operates. This information provides the foundation upon which successful marketing strategies are built.

Specific National Curriculum Objectives Covered:

- Elasticity, the concept of elasticity of demand: price, income and promotional
- calculation of price, income, and promotional elasticity of demand
- interpretation of elasticity results
- the impact of elasticity measures on business decisions
- the limitations of the concept of elasticity in its various forms
- Product development and the process of product development
- sources of new ideas for product development
- the importance of Research and Development (R&D)
- Sales forecasting
- the need to forecast sales
- time series analysis: calculation and use of four period centered moving average method to forecast sales.
- qualitative sales forecasting and the impact of sales forecasting on business decisions

Unit 8 - Marketing strategy**Approximate length: 4 weeks**

Marketing strategy refers to a company's comprehensive plan to achieve specific marketing objectives, considering its resources and the external market conditions. A marketing strategy serves as a roadmap for businesses to reach their desired market position. It involves making decisions on product offerings, pricing, promotional methods, and distribution channels based on market analysis. In the digital age, understanding and integrating online marketing tools is crucial. Additionally, businesses must ensure their marketing practices uphold ethical standards to maintain trust and reputation.

Specific National Curriculum Objectives Covered:

- Planning the marketing strategy
- the contents of a marketing plan: objectives, resources, research, marketing mix
- the benefits and limitations of marketing planning
- Approaches to marketing strategy
- 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
- Strategies for international marketing
- the implications for marketing of increased globalisation and economic collaboration
- the importance of international marketing for a business
- international markets - identification, selection, and entry
- whether a business in each situation should develop an international market through pan-global marketing or maintain local differences.
- choosing a strategy, in each situation, to develop a global market.
- the factors influencing the method of entry into international markets.

Unit 9 - Location and scale

Approximate length: 4 weeks

This A Level topic builds on the learning acquired in topic 4, enabling candidates to study the wider aspects of production. Candidates will develop an understanding of the importance of the location of a business and the effect that the location has on other aspects of the operations of the business. Candidates will learn about the importance of quality and the effect that quality has on the other functional areas of business. Candidates will develop an awareness of quality in terms of operations management (i.e., being 'fit for purpose') as opposed to a customer's perception of quality of a product. Candidates will learn about various aspects of operations strategy, including the longer-term planning needed to improve the operations of a business, innovations such as enterprise resource planning (ERP) and lean production, and tools such as critical path analysis.

Specific National Curriculum Objectives Covered:

- the factors that determine location and relocation
- the differences between local, national, and international location decisions
- the reasons for and impact of offshoring and reshoring
- the impact of globalisation on location and relocation decisions

Unit 10 - Quality management

Approximate length: 4 weeks

Quality management refers to the processes, techniques, and systems employed by a business to ensure that its products or services meet and exceed customer expectations. Quality management is essential for businesses to consistently meet customer expectations and maintain a competitive edge in the market. While traditional methods focus on detecting defects, modern approaches emphasize prevention and continuous improvement. Regardless of the methods used, quality management is about building a culture where quality is seen as everyone's responsibility.

Specific National Curriculum Objectives Covered:

- quality in terms of meeting customer expectations
- the importance of quality

- the impact of methods of quality control on a business
- the impact of methods of quality assurance on a business
- the impact of Total Quality Management (TQM) on a business
- Benchmarking and the importance of benchmarking in quality management

Unit 11 - Operations strategy

Approximate length: 4 weeks

Operations strategy encompasses decisions about how production processes are organized, where operations are located, how capacity is managed, and more. An effective operations strategy integrates seamlessly with a business's overarching goals, ensuring that operational capabilities support desired market positioning and business objectives. Modern strategies often emphasize efficiency, flexibility, sustainability, and responsiveness to changing customer needs.

Specific National Curriculum Objectives Covered:

- Operational decisions
- the influence of human, marketing, and finance resource availability on operations decisions
- the changing role of Information Technology (IT) and Artificial Intelligence (AI) in operations management
- Flexibility and innovation
- the need for flexibility about volume, delivery time and specification
- process innovation: changing current processes or adopting new ways of producing products or delivering\ services.
- Enterprise resource planning (ERP)
- the main features of an ERP programme
- how ERP can improve a business' efficiency in relation to inventory control, costing and pricing, capacity utilisation, responses to change, workforce flexibility, management information
- Lean production
- the aims and purposes of lean production
- Kaizen, quality circles, simultaneous engineering, cell production, JIT manufacturing and waste management as operational strategies to achieve lean production.
- the limitations of operational strategies to achieve lean production.
- the links between lean production and inventory control, quality, employees' roles, capacity management and efficiency
- Operations planning
- the need for planning operations
- network diagrams as tools to plan operations.
- the main elements of a network diagram: activities, dummy activities, nodes
- network diagrams as means of performing Critical Path Analysis (CPA), including identification of the minimum project duration and the critical path, calculation of total and free float, interpretation of the results of the analysis of a network, how minimum duration and floats might be used in project management.
- the benefits and limitations of CPA as a management tool

Term 2

Unit 12 - Financial statements

Approximate length: 4 weeks

This A Level topic builds on the learning acquired in topic 5, with a focus on accounting information, including published accounts. Candidates will develop an understanding of what can be learnt from the accounts of a business. Candidates are not expected to be able to draw up a set of accounts. However, candidates do need to be able to calculate relevant ratios and use this data to inform business decisions.

Specific National Curriculum Objectives Covered:

- Statement of profit or loss
- the meaning and purpose of the statement of profit or loss
- the contents of a statement of profit or loss: revenue, cost of sales, gross profit, expenses, profit from operations (operating profit), taxation, profit for the year, dividends, retained earnings.
- amendment of a statement of profit or loss
- the impact on the statement of profit or loss of a given change.
- Statement of financial position
- the meaning and purpose of statement of financial position
- the contents of a statement of financial position including non-current assets, current assets, current liabilities, net current assets, net assets, non-current liabilities, reserves, and equity
- amendment of a statement of financial position
- the relationships between items in the statement of profit or loss and the statement of financial position
- Inventory valuation
- the difficulties of valuing inventory
- the net realisable value method
- Depreciation
- the role of depreciation in the accounts
- the impact of depreciation (straight-line method only) on the statement of financial position and the statement of profit or loss

Unit 13 - Analysis of published accounts

Approximate length: 4 weeks

Analysis of published accounts involves evaluating the financial statements of a company, typically the income statement, balance sheet, and cash flow statement, to gain insights into its financial health and performance. The analysis of published accounts provides stakeholders, especially investors and creditors, with valuable information about a company's financial status and performance. Financial ratios are instrumental tools for this analysis, offering a way to interpret complex financial data into comprehensible metrics. However, it's crucial to understand the

limitations of these ratios and to consider a broader range of factors when making decisions based on published accounts.

Specific National Curriculum Objectives Covered:

Liquidity ratios

- the meaning and importance of liquidity
- current ratio: calculation and interpretation
- acid test ratio: calculation and interpretation
- methods of improving liquidity
- Profitability ratios
- the meaning and importance of profitability
- return on capital employed: calculation and interpretation.
- gross profit margin: calculation and interpretation
- profit margin: calculation and interpretation
- methods of improving profitability

Financial efficiency ratios

- the meaning and importance of financial efficiency
- rate of inventory turnover: calculation and interpretation
- trade receivables turnover (days): calculation and interpretation
- trade payables turnover (days): calculation and interpretation
- methods of improving financial efficiency

Gearing ratio

- the meaning and importance of gearing
- gearing ratio: calculation and interpretation
- methods of improving gearing
- the meaning and importance of return to investors
- dividend yield: calculation and interpretation
- dividend cover: calculation and interpretation
- price/earnings ratio: calculation and interpretation
- methods of improving investor return

Unit 14 - Investment appraisal

Approximate length: 4 weeks

Investment appraisal is a critical tool in capital budgeting, aiding businesses in making informed decisions about large investments. Through a mix of quantitative methods like payback, ARR, NPV, and IRR, companies can gauge the potential returns and risks of projects. However, it's crucial to blend these insights with qualitative factors and be mindful of the uncertainties that come with projections.

Specific National Curriculum Objectives Covered:

- The concept of investment appraisal
- the need for investment appraisal
- Basic methods: payback, accounting rate of return (ARR)

- the meaning, calculation, and interpretation of payback and ARR
- $(ARR = (\text{average profit} / \text{average investment}) \times 100)$
- Discounted cash flow method: net present value (NPV)
- the meaning, calculation, and interpretation of NPV
- Investment appraisal decisions
- quantitative results and their impact on investment decisions
- qualitative factors and their impact on investment decisions
- comparison of investment appraisal methods, including their limitations

Unit 15 - Finance and accounting strategy**Approximate length: 4 weeks**

The focus of this topic is on operations management from the production of physical products to managing the process of creating services. There are different ways a business can produce a product, with a range of aspects to consider in its production. Candidates are provided with the opportunity to apply their understanding of production methods in a variety of business contexts.

Specific National Curriculum Objectives Covered:

- the use of financial statements in developing strategies
- the contents of an annual report and their usefulness to business and other stakeholders
- assessment of business performance over time and against competitors
- the impact of accounting data including ratio results on business strategy
- the impact of debt or equity decisions on ratio results
- the impact of changes in dividend strategy on ratio results
- the impact of business growth on ratio results
- the impact of other business strategies on ratio results
- the limitations of using published accounts and ratio analyses

Assessment

Formative: Throughout each episode, lesson and within the IGCSE syllabus, feedback is maximized to focus children on exam technique and applying their learning coherently. Formative written feedback, in the copybooks and oral comments given immediately after learning, steer children to more formal examination-based answers and mark schemes. High quality peer feedback is scaffolded and developed, so that children are analytical in their feedback. This can be further reflected on for self-assessment. Children are empowered to make decisions on the direction of their learning. They evaluate and analyse their performance in both practical and theory lessons and activities. The course also provides many opportunities to kinesthetically assess the theory work as well as the practical work. The standard of performance is assessed against the past paper mark schemes and success criteria from the IGCSE specification. This helps children improve their performance as they progress across the course. They are also given the opportunity to use mechanical and technological sports apparatus, which provide a constant stream of immediate feedback for the tracking of assessment. Alongside assessed pieces of work, teachers will carry out ongoing formative assessments and give children regular formative feedback to help them improve.

Unit 16- External influences on business activity**Approximate length: 4 weeks.**

External influences are factors outside the control of a business that can impact its operations, performance, and strategic decisions. External influences can significantly impact business activities. While businesses can't control these factors, they can adapt and strategize based on them. Being proactive and responsive to changes in the external environment is crucial for long-term success and sustainability.

Specific National Curriculum Objectives Covered:

Political and legal

- the advantages and disadvantages of privatization in each situation
- the advantages and disadvantages of nationalizations in each situation
- how a government might use the law to seek to control: employment practices, conditions of work (including health and safety), wage levels, marketing behaviour, competition, location decisions, particular goods, and services
- the impact of changes in political and legal factors on business and business decisions
- Economics and how the government might intervene to help businesses and encourage enterprise.
- how government might intervene to constrain business activity
- how government might deal with market failure
- the key macroeconomic objectives of governments: low unemployment, low inflation, economic growth
- What macroeconomic objectives and performance of an economy can have an impact on business activity
- government policies used to achieve macroeconomic objectives: monetary, fiscal, supply-side and exchange rate policies.
- the impact of changes in these government policies on business and business decisions
- Social and demographic
- the impact of and issues associated with corporate social responsibility (CSR), e.g., accounting practices, paying incentives for the award of contracts, social auditing.
- why businesses need to consider the needs of the community including pressure groups.
- demographic changes at a local, national, and global level and the impact of social and demographic change on business and business decisions
- Technological
- the impact of technological change on business and business decisions
- Competitors and suppliers
- the impact of competitors and suppliers on business and business decisions
- International
- the importance of international trading links and their impact on business and business decisions
- how international trade agreements might have an impact on businesses.
- the role of technology in international trade
- the advantages and disadvantages that a multinational might bring to a country.
- relationships between multinationals and governments

Environmental

- how physical environmental issues might influence business behaviour.
- how a business and its stakeholders may use an environmental audit
- the impact of the growing importance of sustainability on business and business decisions

Assessment

Formative: Throughout each episode, lesson and within the IGCSE syllabus, feedback is maximized to focus children on exam technique and applying their learning coherently. Formative written feedback, in the copybooks and oral comments given immediately after learning, steer children to more formal examination-based answers and mark schemes. High quality peer feedback is scaffolded and developed, so that children are analytical in their feedback. This can be further reflected on for self-assessment. Children are empowered to make decisions on the direction of their learning. They evaluate and analyse their performance in both practical and theory lessons and activities. The course also provides many opportunities to kinesthetically assess the theory work as well as the practical work. The standard of performance is assessed against the past paper mark schemes and success criteria from the IGCSE specification. This helps children improve their performance as they progress across the course. They are also given the opportunity to use mechanical and technological sports apparatus, which provide a constant stream of immediate feedback for the tracking of assessment. Alongside assessed pieces of work, teachers will carry out ongoing formative assessments and give children regular formative feedback to help them improve.

Summative: Due to the nature of the subject and course, feedback is given at the end of each chapter and unit. As the A level in Business studies is split into Paper 3 Business decision making (60 marks) and paper 4 Business strategy (40 marks) the children are assessed on activities from the different section in the syllabus guidelines. In Term 1, the department internally assesses using one test throughout the term and one as an end of year Mock Examination in November/December. In Term 2 progress will be measured as class tests.