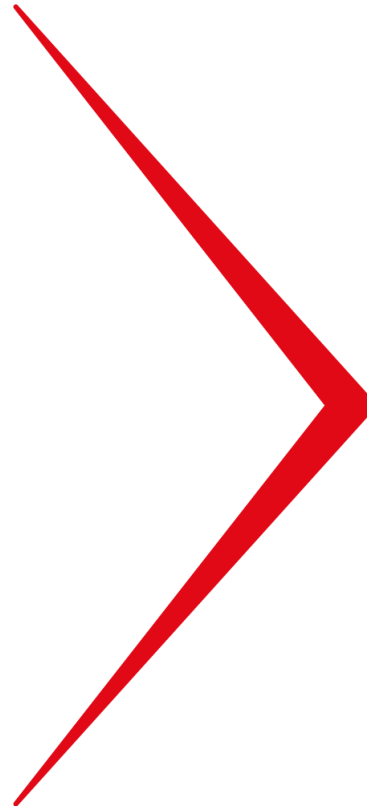




Business, Strategy & Technology in 2021

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***Evolution of
BST***

BST exam performance in 2020

SITTING	PASS RATE	AVERAGE MARK (WHOLE EXAM)	WEAKEST REQUIREMENT		
			Requirement number	Average mark	Type of requirement
March 2020	86.9%	64.8%	1.3	45.5%	Price elasticity calculation & discussion
September 2020	85.0%	63.4%	2.3	56.8%	Divisional performance measures
December 2020	89.2%	66.5%	3.2	57.5%	Own ideas: business decision with supporting calculations

Moving on from 2020 to 2021 exams

Very minor syllabus clarifications:

- Two explicit references to climate change (1b, 2e)
- One explicit reference to using statistics for data analysis (1g)

No fundamental change:

- 3 scenarios: longer, medium, shorter. 2.5 hour exam.
- Knowledge is 20-25 marks, the remainder are Skills marks.
- 20-30 marks for calculation, analysis and interpretation of numbers

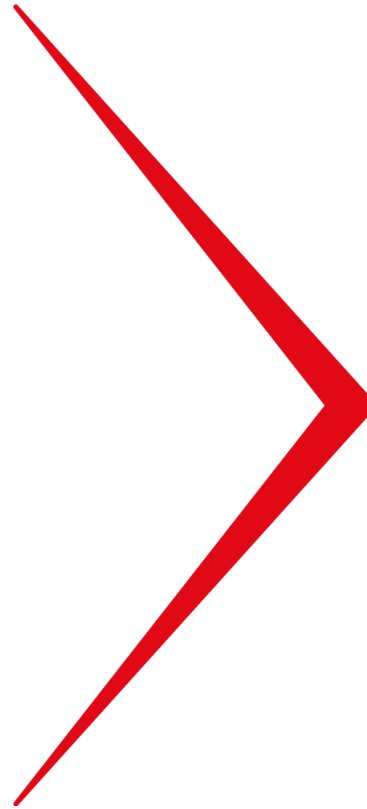
New exam software

Learning materials in 2021

- Change in format and presentation (eBooks)
- Few technical changes to study manual or question bank
- Question bank:
 - Nine old, non-exam questions have been dropped
 - Two exam papers (six questions) added (D19, M20)
 - Mocks include three full past exams (D18, J19, S19)

BST exams in 2021

- Numbers/data analysis requirements
- Presentation of information in exam paper/ skills required
- ‘Own ideas’ requirement
- Ethics
- Big pools of marks
- Presenting answers
- Other points



Using data

Numbers requirements

Examples of 'numbers requirements' in exams:

- **Data analysis** eg D20 Q1.1
- **Calculate** specific figure eg breakeven and maximum profit D20 Q2.3
- Discuss something, and include **supporting calculations** eg to identify whether an idea is worthwhile D20 Q3.2
- Use **numbers within scenario** in answers to inform discussion/decision making eg D20 all three questions (level varies from paper to paper)

Data analysis requirement

- Can be performance analysis over time or against budget
- Can be production of a budget or forecast
- Candidates should:
 - work with numbers / assumptions given THEN
 - use the output to produce written interpretation, analysis and evaluation

Data analysis requirement

- Step back to look at overall context for data, the 'big picture' – eg has a profit in one year become a loss?
- Decide which 'other useful metrics' to calculate
- Also calculate percentage changes between one period and the other (2 MARKS MAXIMUM)
- Present data and related calculations professionally with labelled rows and columns

Data analysis requirement

‘Other useful metrics’:

- Ratios derived from two financial figures eg cost and profit ratios
- Measures derived from one financial and one operating figure eg price per unit, contribution per customer
- Measures derived from two operating figures eg sales volume per shop

Data analysis requirement

- Use the output...
 - ratios and measures given in question eg gross profit margin
 - 'other useful metrics' calculated from data
 - period to period changes calculated from data...
- ...to support written explanation and interpretation of organisation as presented in the scenario.
- **DO NOT just repeat period-to-period percentage changes in written form**
- Use What-How-Why-When-SoWhat analysis – Chapter 12 section 9

Presentation of information in exam paper

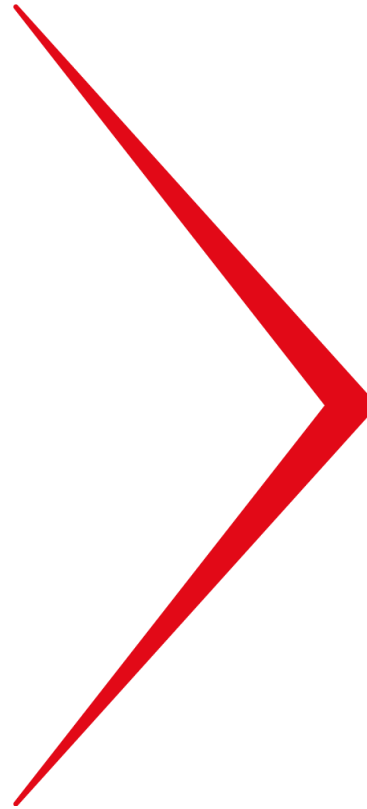
- Scenario itself may contain some important numbers within the narrative
- ‘Non-scenario information’ (often in exhibits):
 - **Tables of data**
 - **Visualisations of data:** bar charts/graphs/pie charts, diagrams, data dashboards
 - **Alternative perspectives** in narrative form eg blogs, news stories, extracts from social media (eg D20 Q1)
- Varying levels of non-scenario information across exam sittings
- Candidates should use and refer to information from numerical data, visualisations and alternative perspectives in their answers

Skills required re information presented

- Evaluate information in the scenario in **context**
- Identify **key issues** in the scenario (eg the long-term nature of the business cycle in Q1 D20) and use them in answer
- Identify relevance of information to different aspects of the scenario (**no information is irrelevant**)
- Interpret visualisations to look for trends, and relations between data
- Link visualised data to tables of numbers, the scenario and alternative perspectives
- Evaluate content and validity of alternative perspectives

Skills required re information presented

- Exercise professional scepticism/consider data bias – does it all tie up?
 - Consider what information is NOT available
 - Consider source/age of data
 - Question assumptions



***Formulating
ideas***

‘Own ideas’ requirement

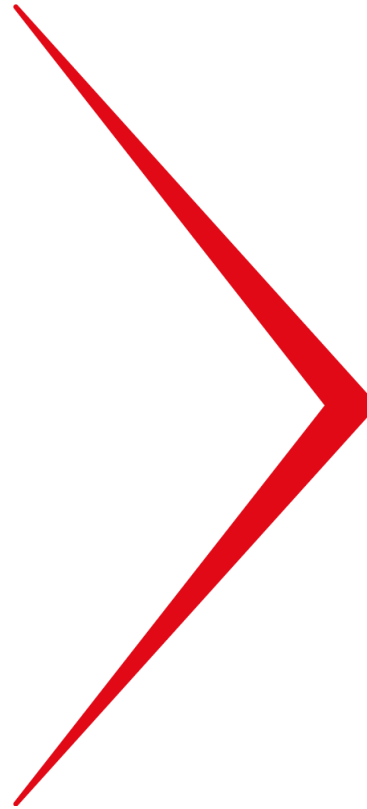
- Requirement for candidate to **use their business acumen** and **think creatively** about an issue within the scenario
- Invited to **‘think on their feet’** and **‘see the bigger picture’** despite less in the scenario to lead them to ideas eg D20 Q3.2
- Could be a standalone question and/or may be a requirement in a question with more traditional requirements also
- No one correct answer for the business

‘Own ideas’ requirement

- Candidates may:
 - have less to go on in the scenario to formulate their answer and/or
 - need to consider a range of ways of approaching their answer
- Need to develop answer by identifying:
 - creative and pragmatic solutions in a business environment
 - opportunities to add value
 - problems that may result from a decision.
- The mark plan is more open: credit is given for ideas, creativity, common sense etc.

Ethics

- One clear ethics requirement BUT ethical issues:
 - may be relevant elsewhere in paper also
 - may not be quite so obviously flagged in scenarios
 - may be linked to other issues eg legality, sustainability, public interest, capture/use of data, use of technology, commercial decisions
 - may also be relevant in other scenarios
- Transparency, Effect, Fairness model usually of limited value
- Conflict of interest, intimidation, honesty, objectivity, confidentiality etc often of more value, if applied
- Include actions in answers if required



The exam

Big pools of marks

- Big pools of marks are good preparation for Advanced level.
- Questions may have a single mark total, eg 20 marks
- There may still be sub-headings/sub-requirements to provide structure (see D20 Q1.3)...
- ... though this is less likely if it is the 'own ideas' requirement
- Mark allocation for sub-headings or sub-requirements is **not** necessarily completely equal (eg fewer marks for final recommendation requirement D20 Q1.3)

Presenting answers

Candidates should:

- Show workings and label calculations clearly
- Structure answers according to the requirement where there are separate elements in the requirement
 - Eg Dec 2020 Q1.2: include two separate sections in the answer for the one requirement: “finance function as a business partner” and “further information that the finance function would require”
- Do not generalise or seek to ‘knowledge dump’ in answer

Other points

Use of models:

- Candidates can choose to use a relevant model(s) as a framework for their answer eg D20 Q2.1
- 'Use relevant models' and 'Use X specific model' are less commonly seen in requirements

Report/briefing note format:

- Should include to/from/date/subject OR a line acknowledging the audience

Other points

Conclusions in answers:

- Give an opinion on the key issue based on preceding analysis: no sitting on the fence
- Expected in DA requirement
- Required when asked to 'advise', 'recommend', 'evaluate'



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