

Designation: - Core Module – Case Study (4267)

Preamble and general guidance on assessment of the report produced for the case study

1. The assessment criteria can only be a guide as to how best to assess a student's response to the CIE case study and its associated requirements. However, it is a strong guide and should augment and inform the professional judgement of the assessor.
2. What is sought from the candidate for a pass grade (or above) will always be: -
 - a report that conforms to the CIE Diploma in Management
 - a synoptic report in that it draws from a range of modules studied as part of the Diploma in Management - these are the 'Core' modules
 - a balanced report - the candidate may display some bias when structuring their report, for instance - Finance, HRM, Strategic Management, etc. but in all instances they must draw on a number of aspects of general management if they are to gain an overall pass grade or above.

When assessing the report it will be clear that to gain a pass or above the candidate will need to indicate in various ways a high degree of competence. Therefore, the assessor must keep in mind that this is a general management qualification and not one in Financial management, HR management, Information Systems Management or any of the other specialists areas. It is for this reason that expectations must be realistic and pitched at a level commensurate with the 'Competence Criteria' areas as well as the 'Skills and Knowledge' specified within each of the Core modules.

With the previous points in mind it is obviously recommended that the candidate undertake the 'Case Study' after successfully completing the CIE 'Core' and 'Option' modules

Not all candidates will have first hand experience of a 'for profit' organisation. Some may have a background in government or public service or working for other 'not for profit' organisations such as charities. Whilst it may be tempting to take such lack of experience in the commercial or industrial sector into account, this would be doing the candidate a disservice as well as going against the grain of what the CIE Diploma in Management is about.

A candidate who has studied the components of the Diploma core modules and gained a pass grade or above should have the basis on which to tackle the case studies made available by CIE. But it is much more challenging to combine all these aspects into a 'Consultant's' report as required in the case study than to produce a report in a single aspect of general management. This also needs to be considered when assessing the report.

4. Finally, it is the overall quality of the report, when measured against the requirements of the case study, that matters. Reading, research and analysis should have been a key component of the study of individual core modules. Such 'basic' research should not be necessary again. Therefore, in this instance, there is no need to identify and assess separately this aspect of the candidate's work. Also, the whole case study requirement concerns the application of knowledge and this is the managerial skill sought. Therefore, this aspect of assessment is an integral part of the general assessment criteria that is given below.

The Overall Quality of the Candidate's Report in Response to the Requirement of the CIE Case Study – Distinction Level

- The candidate's report must read in such a way that it is convincing in its approach, detail and presentation. Arguments should be developed by drawing from presented evidence and where there is a weakness in any conclusions because of lack of data, this should be referred to
- It should be easy to 'navigate' the report, which should be constructed into various 'sections' that address specific aspects of the 'consultancy' requirement as per of the case study - indexes, references/bibliography, sources etc should all be contained in the report
- The body of the report should be preceded by a detailed executive summary of 'findings/outcomes and recommendations' that allows the manager who is reading the report to gain a clear account of what is to come in the main body of the report; a conclusion should also be an integral part of the report and this should develop from arguments/discussions/findings that are presented in the body of the report, and, where appropriate, it should draw attention to any additional research advised in order to confirm the recommendations
- The financial aspects of the report should show worked examples in sufficient details for them to be interrogated. 'What ifs' should be included if appropriate. Any accompanying risk assessment should be framed in such a manner that there is a total lack of ambiguity in its conclusions even if they are unclear because further research is required
- The report must read holistically in that it quite clearly shows the interrelationship of one aspect of general management to another and the impact that a change in any specific aspect/dimension will influence the other dimensions mentioned within the report
- The candidate should show no fear in highlighting aspects that they feel requires a more specialist input – this may relate to local legal or financial requirements but this must not be used to the extent that it abrogates the need to address the issues within the case study. However, such highlights would make a clear indication that the candidate is aware of their limitations and this should be regarded as a strength
- The use of technical terms, such as in Finance, Marketing, HR, Information Management etc. should be applied correctly throughout the report
- The depth to which the report goes must be suitable for the advice requested but should avoid excessive technical detail, which would be more suitably included within an annex. In other words, a sense of audience is maintained throughout the report
- In developing conclusions and recommendations the candidate avoids 'sitting on the fence'. The consultancy requires clarity of recommendations and outcomes that are of direct and specific value to the person 'commissioning' the work. These must be supported by evidence in one way or another. Above all the report must be convincing in that it is likely to be of direct value to the recipient.
- The report covers in appropriate detail all that is requested in the 'brief'. However, where the candidate believes that the report would be enhanced by reference to aspects of management that had not been specifically requested, they should be included in order to make the report even more valuable to the recipient than might otherwise have been expected

The Overall Quality of the Candidate's Report in Response to the Requirement of the CIE Case Study – Pass / Merit Level

- The candidate's report should read in a way that is reasonably convincing in both detail and its style of presentation. Evidence should naturally lead to sensible findings, although there may be some weaknesses; however, attention is not always drawn to these weaknesses
- The report should be logical and easy to follow. It should be constructed in the style of a consultant's business report and be in various sections that deal with functional issues, such as Finance, HR, Marketing etc. It should address in detail what has been requested in the consultancy brief but may not address all these aspects in equal weight. There should be some form of index, references/bibliography, sources etc that makes it reasonably easy to find ones way around the report and re-visit areas with reasonable ease
- An effective executive summary should be included at the start of the report that is directly related to what is to come in the body of the report. A logical conclusion based upon the weight of evidence presented should be the outcome of the report. Some reference should be made to the apparent strengths and weaknesses of the presented arguments/findings, where there is overwhelming or a shortage of relevant evidence
- Where the financial components of the report are being referred to, examples should be included. Where appropriate, these may be provided as an annex. The candidate should highlight any weakness of argument. Where a risk assessment has been requested, or is called for, this should be given clearly
- The report should include all aspects required by the consultancy brief but it may be that there is some imbalance in the specific aspects of the report. This may lead to some components being covered in such a way that they are given less stress than they deserve. For instance HR Management at the expense of Financial considerations
- The candidate may choose to omit aspects about which they have only flimsy research evidence. They choose to draw conclusions that may be justified but are not wholly supported by the presented evidence. Equally, the candidate may choose to present unsupported findings but ignore the need to stress their tentative nature. In other words, the candidate still lacks the confidence to be totally honest and admit that they have been unable to research specific aspects relevant to the case study. This leads to the report exhibiting some bias but is not so serious as to render the report of little value
- For the most part, technical terms appropriate to specific aspects of management are correctly used in a range of contexts. This might include Finance, Marketing, HR, Information Management, etc.
- The depths into which the candidate's report goes is overall sufficient to be convincing, but may lack detail or contain too much detail in some aspects. Technical annexes may be included but this is not always the case. Throughout the report the presentation is sound and, in the main, is appropriate for this level of management

- Conclusions and recommendations are clear and generally lack ambiguity, as well as relate to what was asked for in the consultancy. The overall impression given by the report is that it would be useful; however, some further investigation may be required because of some minor omissions
- The report generally covers what has been requested in the 'brief' although there may be some specific aspect that has been omitted or dealt with in inappropriate depth. There may be aspects that would have enhanced the overall quality of the report and, had they been included, it would have led to higher marks – examples such as a political assessment if there is any change of government; the impact of inflation and its relationship to lending rates, etc.

The Overall Quality of the Candidate's Report in Response to the Requirement of the CIE Case Study – Fail

- The candidate's report fails to read in a way that is reasonably convincing in both detail and in style of presentation. It lacks structure and there is too much that fails to address the tasks posed in the case study
- Evidence does not naturally lead to reasonable findings and there are significant weakness in the recommendations given because of a lack of appropriate detail for this level of report
- The report does not have a logical flow to it and it is difficult to follow as well as comprehend. It has poor construction and it does not resonate of a consultant's business type report. It lacks basic components such as an executive summary, a suitable index, poor bibliography etc.
- The various sections that deal with functional issues such as Finance, HR, Marketing etc. tend towards superficiality and do not fully address in convincing detail what has been requested from the consultancy. There may be a distinct bias where several aspects of managerial issues have been addressed, - for instance undue weighting is given to the Management of Finance at the expense of HR Management, etc.
- There is no effective summary at the beginning of the report that is directly related to what is to come in the body of the report. A logical conclusion based upon the weight of evidence presented is poorly developed and does not seem to flow from the body of the report
- There is only indirect or poor reference to apparent strengths and weaknesses of presented arguments/findings, where there is overwhelming or a shortage of relevant evidence
- Where the financial components of the report are being referred to, worked examples are not provided or, where provided, they tend to be inaccurate. Attention to any weakness of argument in these examples is not highlighted
- Where a risk assessment has been requested or is called for, this is poorly stated or excluded all together
- The report fails to include all areas required by the consultancy brief
- The candidate omits aspects about which they have only flimsy research evidence, but does not draw attention to this. The candidate draws conclusions that are unjustified because of lack of evidence or are not wholly supported by presented evidence. The candidate still lacks the confidence to be totally honest and admit that they have been unable to research specific aspects relevant to the case study. This leads to the report exhibiting serious bias that renders it of little value

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- There are significant examples of where technical terms are inappropriately used. This might include Finance, Marketing, HR, Information Management, Strategic Management, etc.
- The depth pursued by the candidate is generally shallow and lacks detail or contains too much detail so that it obscures the argument or points being made
- Conclusions and recommendations in the main lack clarity and are sometimes ambiguous. The overall impression is given by the report that it would not be very useful and would be poor value for money as seen through the eyes of the person who commissioned it. The report does not generally cover what has been requested in the 'brief' and there are too many omissions or an overall lack of depth that leads one not to take it seriously.