



## **Moderator's Assignment Feedback – Strategic Planning**

After each series, we ask our moderators to provide a report on each assignment-based unit to identify:

- Any questions which were usually answered particularly well, including main points and qualities that characterised good answers.
- Any questions which were usually answered badly and main weaknesses in candidates' answers.
- Common errors or misconceptions made by candidates.

We hope that this will be of assistance when completing your Strategic Planning assignment.

### **General feedback to candidates**

A range of responses this series shows that the candidates who undertake extensive reading and research into the subject and both apply and analyse this in the context of the tasks, are able to secure high marks in this subject. Conversely, those who rely on their existing knowledge of workplace strategies or who pay minimal lip service to comments within the CICM study text are unable to secure a pass at the required level.

It is worth mentioning that marks can only be awarded for responses that answer the specific questions asked. Several candidates failed to follow the task requirements and mark descriptions and did not demonstrate subject knowledge in the context of the assignment.

All candidates are reminded to read and take note of the contents of the Level 5 Learner Guidance. This includes guidance on the use of appendices, copied here for ease of reference. "Use appendices carefully – you may support your work with appendices, which do not form part of your word count. However, it must be noted that appendix items themselves do not attract marks. It is important then, that any appendix is relevant to the question and referred to in the body of the answer." In this assignment the relevance is in Tasks 1 and 3.

It should also be noted that the 'suggested areas for consideration' are there to guide the candidates toward potential subject areas and candidates are not expected to write everything they know about each suggested area in a separate document. At this level, candidates are expected instead, to select the relevant areas and adapt them to specifically answer the task given them.

Referencing should be consistent and in Harvard format.

### **Feedback for each assignment question**

**Task1. Investigate and fully evaluate the factors influencing your organisation. Use both PESTEL and SWOT analysis techniques, along with other appropriate analytical models, to support your answer in an appendix.**

T1 – Most answers gave a general overview of the subject but few showed a depth of knowledge or application to the task. Those who were able to demonstrate purposeful reading and research fared best.

At a technical level there was some understanding of PESTEL, SWOT and in several cases, Porters competitive analysis. However, candidates who applied these techniques to their own organisation secured higher marks than those who simply wrote about the technical nature of the techniques.

**Task 2. Assess your department's performance against a range of appropriate internal and external benchmarks**

T2 –There was some knowledge of external benchmarking organisations but very few were used to benchmark performance in the department. Candidates able to justify and quantify benchmarking standards achieved a good grade. Analysis of competitors also gave a wider context to the responses.

There were attempts to discuss internal measures, but most relied on existing knowledge of internal performance measurements and did not display any wider understanding. This needs to be further assessed with an analysis of actual results where appropriate.

**Task 3. Create a strategy for your department that aligns to organisational strategy and that addresses the factors you analysed in Task 1 and the performance benchmarked in Task 2. Place your answer in a format that can be communicated to relevant stakeholders. Support your answer with a strategic plan, which you should place in your appendix and refer to in your answer**

T3 – This task flows naturally from the content of the previous two tasks. Where Tasks 1 and 2 were poorly answered, candidates struggled to format a reasonable response in this task. Responses to this task, to achieve a pass grade or higher must link back to findings in the earlier tasks.

Candidates who did not follow the format of the task requirements achieved a low mark. The starting point to this task is a format that can be communicated to stakeholders. This should then be supported by a strategic plan in an appendix.

It is worth repeating that candidates use advice in the Level 5 Learner Guidance where advice on formats of reports and plans can be found.