

# GRADE 'A' RAP

RELEVANT TO ALL ACCA QUALIFICATION STUDENTS

THIS ARTICLE CONSIDERS HOW TO PREPARE A GOOD OXFORD BROOKES UNIVERSITY BSC (HONS) DEGREE IN APPLIED ACCOUNTING RAP AND AVOID OBTAINING A LOW DEGREE CLASS.

**To be awarded the Oxford Brookes University BSc (Hons) degree in applied accounting, ACCA students have to submit a Research and Analysis Project (RAP) after passing Papers F1 through to F9, as well as the Professional Ethics Module.**

Before July 2008, the class of degree awarded depended purely on the marks gained in the Fundamentals level papers, but since 1 August 2008, the grade awarded for the RAP (either A, B, C, or fail) may affect the class of degree. It is important that students understand that the class of degree awarded can be improved by submission of a RAP graded A or B; however, the RAP grade cannot lower the class of degree.

With reference to 'Technical and Professional Skills', students will notice that they are required to demonstrate an understanding of the application of 'business models', such as Michael Porter's highly regarded 'five forces model'. The use of this model helps students identify the sources of competition in a chosen industry or sector.

Candidates should ensure that when using any business model, they apply it to the specific context of the organisation that is the subject of their RAP. A description of the model alone will not add much value to any RAP.

The following points summarise the RAP markers' guidelines, which include the criteria that must be satisfied in order to achieve an A grade.

*Understanding of accounting and business models*

'Grade A – An appropriate choice of theory and concepts. Very clear relevance and evidence of wider reading.'

Markers are looking to see if students have used an appropriate range of relevant accounting and business models, linking them to the organisation and to the business context. There should be clear evidence of the use of a wide range of sources of information to obtain economic and industry data. Information on the chosen organisation should go beyond its annual report and the statement of its chief executive officer. Students should demonstrate their understanding of the models used and their context and limitations. There should be no material errors in the application of business models.

*Application of accounting and business models*

'Grade A – Insightful and critical application of models to the project topic.'

Markers are looking for effective use of relevant comparators or benchmarks, eg information relating to the industry and/or a comparable company operating within the same industry. There should be a clear indication of the specific limitations of such information. Where appropriate, candidates should make use of wider areas of information (such as segmental or environmental information) and ensure that they explain the extent of its relevance.

IT IS IMPORTANT THAT STUDENTS UNDERSTAND THAT THE CLASS OF DEGREE AWARDED CAN BE IMPROVED BY SUBMISSION OF A RAP GRADED A OR B; THE RAP GRADE CANNOT LOWER THE CLASS OF DEGREE.

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'GRADE A – AN APPROPRIATE CHOICE OF THEORY AND CONCEPTS. VERY CLEAR RELEVANCE AND EVIDENCE OF WIDER READING.'

Evaluation of information, analysis and conclusions

'Grade A – High level of critical thought shown in the analysis, and a rigorous approach to the evaluation of information.'

Markers are looking for a thorough analysis and evaluation of models and ratios. It is vital that candidates make clear and concise recommendations and conclusions which refer to the use of models, the business context, aims and objectives, and which include clear and critical discussion of limitations. Consideration should be given to the identification and explanation of trends relating to wider market forces and other environmental factors which impact on the corporate strategy.

Presentation of project findings

'Grade A – Can engage the reader in a professional manner and produce a relevant and coherent project report with an appropriate structure.'

When assessing the RAP, markers are looking for a report structure that shows:

- ▣ appropriate headings and sub-headings
- ▣ reader-friendliness, appropriate to the subject of the RAP and its users
- ▣ good use of English, ie lucid with good spelling and grammar
- ▣ appropriate use of relevant graphs/charts which should be clearly labelled
- ▣ good use of appendices.

'GRADE A – INSIGHTFUL AND CRITICAL APPLICATION OF MODELS TO THE PROJECT TOPIC. HIGH LEVEL OF CRITICAL THOUGHT SHOWN IN THE ANALYSIS, AND A RIGOROUS APPROACH TO THE REEVALUATION OF INFORMATION.'

Undergraduate skills

No marks are awarded specifically for undergraduate skills, but the RAP must show the author to be competent; communication must be fluent, grammar and spelling accurate, a range of relevant sources of information must be used, and there must be clear evidence of correct referencing methodology. Specifically, markers are looking for appropriate discussion, where the meaning is clear, and grammar, spelling and punctuation are appropriate. Although a minimum of two information sources are required, such as an annual report, good projects will refer to considerably more than two sources of information.

The next article in the series will focus on Project 6 – 'The key factors or indicators in the motivation of employees in an organisation' – and on how to prepare a successful 'Skills and Learning Statement'.

**Shane Johnson is ACCA's external examiner for the OBU RAP**

'GRADE A – CAN ENGAGE THE READER IN A PROFESSIONAL MANNER AND PRODUCE A RELEVANT AND COHERENT PROJECT REPORT WITH AN APPROPRIATE STRUCTURE.'