

Level 6, Unit 1, Corporate Strategy and Planning (25 credits)

Assessor's guide to interpreting the criteria

RQF general description for Level 6 qualifications

- Achievement at Level 6 requires a learner to command highly specialised skills, including scholastic, across the entire area of business studies, and be able to critically review, consolidate and extend a systematic and coherent body of knowledge.
- Learners at this level are expected to be able to critically evaluate new information, concepts and evidence from a range of sources.
- Learners should be able to utilise, transfer and apply research, diagnostic and creative skills in a wide range of situations. They will exercise appropriate judgement in complex planning, design, technical and management functions related to products and services, operations, and processes, including resourcing.
- The level of accountability at Level 6 expects the learner to accept full responsibility for determining and achieving outcomes. In an observed behaviours plan, he/she should be attempting to lead, for a first time, complex and heterogeneous groups.

EQF general description for Level 6 qualifications (RQF Level 6 is mapped to EQF Level 6)

- Achievement at EQF Level 6 reflects the ability to build, select and use advanced, factual and theoretical knowledge within the field of business. The learner must also demonstrate critical understanding of relevant theories and principles.
- This level commands an advanced range of cognitive and practical skills, demonstrating mastery and innovation, required to solve complex and unpredictable problems in the specialised field of business.
- A learner at this level is expected to manage complex technical or professional activities or projects, taking responsibility for decision-making in unpredictable work or study contexts, and to take responsibility for managing professional development of other individuals and groups.

General requirements

- Conformance of individual student's performance to unit criteria and standards must be confirmed by a trained assessor.
- Centres, in collaboration with the assessors, must ensure that there is system in place allowing collection and storage of routine evidence of students' work (e-portfolios). E-portfolios should be in a format allowing online access, on request, by a TLM account manager.
- When the assessor is satisfied with a candidate matching all the criteria to the specification subject to the guidance below, the Centre can request a review of the e-portfolio by an account manager.
- If the account manager confirms the assessor's judgements, the student will get 30 marks towards his/her final mark, and be allowed to sit a final examination.
- When the student passes the final examination (see below Method of assessment), the student is considered to have completed all the requirements for the qualification.

Expansion of the assessment criteria

1 The learner will be able to critically assess the nature, scope, and need for

corporate strategic planning.

1.1 The learner can assess the nature of strategy and the reasons for the growth of corporate planning in the contemporary organisation.

Candidates should demonstrate understanding of the notion of strategy in an organisational context and critically discuss why and how corporate planning has evolved and gained importance in the world of business.

Evidence: Evidence from assessor's observations and documented work.

1.2 The learner can critically assess the different models, levels and approaches to strategic planning.

Candidates must explore, from an objective and comprehensive perspective, the different models, levels and approaches to strategic planning.

Evidence: Evidence from assessor's observations and documented work.

Additional information and guidance:

Learners are expected to demonstrate proficiency in how strategic planning may be approached, and what are the benefits and shortcomings of these different approaches. They are expected to discuss models, approaches, and processes. They should understand that there is a multitude of models and strategic planning tools available, and that many more appear as this branch of management planning evolves. Though the exact content to be covered here would depend on the curriculum, a complete answer must necessarily include the factors specific to each organisation which ultimately dictate the choice of model/approach of the strategic planning, e.g. purpose of the planning, how dynamic the external environment is, past history and successes/failures, organisational culture, etc.

1.3 The learner can discriminate between alternative corporate strategies adopted in various organisational contexts.

Candidates must be able to recognise alternative corporate strategies in different contexts.

Evidence: Evidence from assessor's observations and documented work.

Additional information and guidance:

Assessors should prepare a range of contexts with sufficient information attached to each of them so as to enable learners to make correct identification of the strategies using key characteristics. Learners are expected to explain their findings and demonstrate in-depth knowledge of the typology and traits of different corporate strategies.

2 The learner will be able to critically evaluate the tools and techniques of analysis for corporate strategic planning decisions.

2.1 The learner can assess the scope, importance and uses of analysis in the corporate planning process.

Candidates must critically assess the scope and importance of analysis, and the uses of analytical

tools in the process of corporate planning.

Evidence: Evidence from assessor's observations and documented work.

Additional information and guidance:

Learners are expected to understand the critical role of analysis for designing comprehensive, realistic and achievable strategies. They should discuss the scope and depth of the key analytical frameworks and models and how they fit in the strategic planning algorithm.

2.2 The learner can critically evaluate the uses and limitations of internal and external analysis techniques in the corporate planning process.

Candidates must be able to identify and critically discuss both positives and negatives of use of particular analytical instruments -- focused on both internal and external environment - and outline the type of distortive impact they may have on the expected outcomes and the strategic planning process as such.

Evidence: Evidence from assessor's observations and documented work.

3 The learner will be able to identify and critically assess strategic options and decisions and choose between them.

As this is a natural continuation of the assessment focus in 2.1 and 2.2 above, learners are expected to connect the results of the analytical process discussed there to the stage of making decisions as to alternative strategic options.

3.1 The learner can assess the nature, scope and importance of objectives in corporate strategy.

Candidates must critically discuss the nature and process of setting objectives, the theoretical principles behind it, and the practicalities, all in the context of objectives - at different hierarchical levels -- being a cornerstone of successful strategic planning.

Evidence: Evidence from assessor's observations and documented work.

3.2 The learner can critically evaluate the range of strategic options and the considerations in choosing between them.

Candidates must be able to carry an informed evaluation of the range of available strategic options in a given context and explain their considerations in making choices.

Evidence: Evidence from assessor's observations and documented work.

Additional information and guidance:

At a minimum level of competence, learners ought to be familiar with the generic strategies and the process of devising new strategies based on a generic one. Departing from there, the exact content of this criterion should be flexible and in accordance with the curriculum at the academy/centre,

although familiarity with more than one strategic set/classification should be targeted at the time of instruction. This criterion is closely related to criterion 3.4 and assessors may want to use a single task to assess the two in a bundle.

3.3 The learner can critically evaluate ideas and concepts related to the decision-making process.

Candidates must evaluate and critically discuss the concept of decision making, the process, and the different styles and techniques associated with it.

Evidence: Evidence from assessor's observations and documented work.

Additional information and guidance:

Note that learners should differentiate between decision making and problem solving, especially in the context of the strategic planning. Assessors may want to check criterion 3.5 and consider a common assessment task for both criteria.

3.4 The learner can assess the key evaluative criteria in strategy selection.

Candidates must explain and assess the rationale behind the choice of key criteria which are used to assist decision making for selection of appropriate strategies.

Evidence: Evidence from assessor's observations and documented work.

Additional information and guidance:

The answers must be comprehensive and reassuring that should the learners face a scenario where a strategy must be selected, they would be objective and systematic in their professional assessment. Note that this criterion is closely related to criterion 3.2 and assessors may want to use a single task to assess the two in a bundle.

3.5 The learner can critically appraise techniques of evaluation and decision making.

Candidates must demonstrate strong analytical skills and appraise different techniques related to evaluation and decision making in the context of strategic planning.

Evidence: Evidence from assessor's observations and documented work.

Additional information and guidance:

This criterion is related to 3.3 and answers must demonstrate ability to extend the evaluation process to a deeper analytical appraisal level. The selection of techniques to be included in the answer should correspond to the curriculum of the academy/centre.

4 The learner will be able to critically assess the issues in and approaches to implementing strategies and measuring and controlling corporate strategic performance.

4.1 The learner can critically assess the organisational and resource elements in the implementation of strategies.

Candidates must critically assess the impact -- and the mechanisms thereof -- of organisational elements and organisational resources on strategy implementation.

Evidence: Evidence from assessor's observations and documented work.

Additional information and guidance:

This criterion focuses on the need to align corporate structure, culture, and resources to the adopted strategies. Learners should be able to analyse this process and identify the key intersections which are most likely to trigger significant impact.

4.2 The learner can critically assess the importance of issues in and approaches to managing change.

Candidates must identify and analyse key issues and major approaches to managing change.

Evidence: Evidence from assessor's observations and documented work.

Additional information and guidance:

Learners should be able to discuss the different stakeholders in a typical change management scenario, identify the skills and competencies which enable these stakeholders to contribute to the organisational change, point to risks related to resistance to change, identify HR strategies and approaches which are typically being applied to facilitate the processes of change.

4.3 The learner can critically evaluate the techniques of strategy evaluation and control.

Candidates must identify and critically evaluate the main techniques of strategy evaluation and control within an organisation.

Evidence: Evidence from assessor's observations and documented work.

Additional information and guidance:

Answers should demonstrate that the learners are confident in the identification and use of appropriate techniques related to the evaluation and control stages in the strategic planning process. They must be familiar with performance measurement and data analysis, understand the need for continuous monitoring and evaluation, and how controls function - as part of the strategy and as an external corrective mechanism.

5 The learner will be able to critically evaluate key contemporary issues and future challenges affecting corporate strategic planning.

5.1 The learner can critically assess global influences and aspects of corporate strategic planning.

Candidates must identify and critically assess the global influences and international implications of corporate strategic planning.

Evidence: Evidence from assessor's observations and documented work.

Additional information and guidance:

Learners are expected to understand that strategic planning at the level of a typical firm targeting a single national market, or a strategic business unit of a larger firm, differ from corporate strategic planning of an organisation with branches and/or global operations. Accordingly, environmental issues which arise from the global exposure must be discussed, and the global implications to the strategic planning process must be given proper attention.

5.2 The learner can critically evaluate corporate strategy in innovative and entrepreneurial organisations.

Candidates must critically discuss and evaluate the characteristics of the strategic planning process -- including strategy implementation -- in the context of innovative and entrepreneurial organisations.

Evidence: Evidence from assessor's observations and documented work.

Additional information and guidance:

Learners should demonstrate understanding of Mintzberg's organisational configurations framework. In particular, they must clarify how strategic planning takes place in two organisational contexts with similar characteristics - in a flat, flexible, lean organisation with minimum structure (entrepreneurial organisation), and in a creative 'adhocracy' (innovative organisation).

5.3 The learner can critically assess social, ethical, stakeholder and corporate governance issues in corporate strategy and planning.

Candidates must identify and critically assess social, ethical, and stakeholder issues, as well as these related to corporate governance, which arise, and must be dealt with, within the strategic planning and implementation processes.

Evidence: Evidence from assessor's observations and documented work.

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