

Introduction

This guide seeks to clarify a number of issues arising from the experience of marking the work of the first candidates for the new AS level economics unit 6353 in the summer of 2001. Although 35% of the candidates achieved grade A, some 16% of candidates failed – both figures rather higher than on the other AS units. It was clear that part of the explanation for this was a rather varied cross-centre performance, with some candidates appearing to be rather under-prepared for the examination. In particular, it was felt that there are some elements of the new AS specification that need clarification and emphasis.

It is hoped that by providing a guide to the unit in an accessible format a more level playing field between centres will be created. Edexcel is aware that many teachers find it difficult to attend the INSET conferences and feedback sessions, and that pupils rarely get the chance to meet principal examiners. The objective of the web guides is to make the content of INSET meetings more widely available.

The 6353 Specification

In many ways the objective of preparing pupils for an exclusively macroeconomic unit for AS level is an ambitious one. Many teachers have indicated that in their experience macroeconomics presents a higher order of difficulty than microeconomics. However, there are a number of features of 6353 that should help reduce the burden on pupils and teachers.

- First, the theoretical content of the unit is limited to a basic short-run AD/AS framework. There will be no questions requiring the use of 45 degree diagrams (or for which such diagrams will be more helpful). There is no need for teachers to extend the analysis to include monetarist v Keynesian variants
 - indeed, the experience from the exams has been that candidates find it difficult to apply such variants to the analysis of exogenous shocks. All candidates need for the ‘long run’ is to consider shifts in the (short-run) aggregate supply curve. The guide includes an overview of the AD/AS model which specifies the level of analysis required.
- Second, there is a restricted but clear-cut requirement for candidates to be secure in basic macroeconomic definitions. A key part of this guide is to provide a comprehensive list of the definitions contained in the specification. Candidates are well advised to learn this list off by heart – it was clear from the first exam that many candidates had little idea of some of the key terms of macroeconomics even though they appear in the specification.

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• Third, the international content of the AS unit is limited to considering the impact on the AD/AS framework of external shocks, including exchange rate movements. Other aspects of international economics are reserved for unit 6.

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Last summer's statistics

The unit was sat by over 6000 candidates. The mean mark was 31.9/60. The standard deviation, at 12.1, was double that on units 1 and 2. The A grade boundary was set at 38/60, the E grade boundary at 19/60 – other grades are then automatically determined evenly between these two poles. Using the formula laid down by QCA the raw marks translated into UMS marks as follows:

19/60 _ 48/120

38/60 _ 96/100

Any mark equal to or above 48/60 translated to 120/120 UMS equivalent. 35% of candidates achieved grade A, 16% failed. Whilst only 30% of candidates were awarded grade A on units 1 and 2 the failure rate on these units was rather lower.

Some remark information

Remarks for unit 3 were requested for relatively few candidates (at the time of writing less than 100, all remarked by the principal examiner). Of these, approximately 10% were raised by more than a grade, 40% raised by one grade, 40% were left unchanged and 10% reduced. The assumption is that remark requests are a biased sample of the overall population of scripts – in particular, that teachers can spot that something has gone significantly wrong with the results of an individual candidate. However, these percentages in no way represent a target or future expectation. The usual explanation for a significant increase in marks lay in the candidates' handwriting or uncertain command of English, with the content unrecognised by the original examiner, although there were some cases where the mark scheme had simply not been applied appropriately.

Contents of the Guide

The guide is organised as follows. An overview of the teaching requirement – with

additional guidance about the specification - is followed by a brief survey of the AD/AS model with a description of what is, and what is not, required for the unit 3 examination. There follows an introduction to the evaluation component of the paper. At the heart of the guide is a definitions list that seeks to be as comprehensive as possible, followed by the definitions themselves. These are particularly intended to help candidates in the revision phase of their learning. The guide ends with suggestions for teaching particular aspects of the course and links to useful resources for teaching AS level macroeconomics.

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