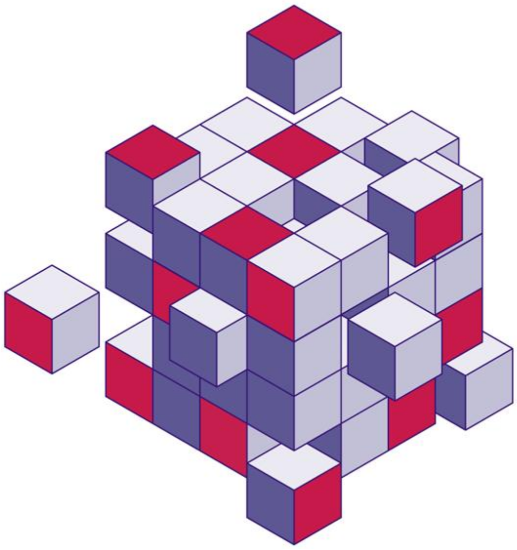
The Gryphon School
Sixth Form
Business Studies A Level Handbook



Contents

Course outline with key assessment dates

The A Level Business Studies course focusses on how businesses work internally and how they are influenced by external factors. You will look at the variety of strategies that can be implemented that would help a business to successfully meet their objectives.

During the delivery of the course we will be using a variety of different business contexts that include large/small, UK based/international, service based/manufacturing. Studies will include:

- the importance of the context of business in relation to decision making
- the interrelated nature of business activities and how they affect competitiveness
- key business functions: marketing, finance, human resources and production
- the competitive environment and the markets in which businesses operate
- the influences on functional decisions and plans including ethical and environmental issues
- the factors that might determine whether a decision is successful e.g. the quality of data and the degree of uncertainty
- how technology is changing the way decisions are made and how businesses operate and compete
- the impact on stakeholders of functional decisions and their response to such decisions
- use of non-quantitative and quantitative data in decision making (including the interpretation of index numbers and calculations such as ratios and percentages).

How the course is assessed

There are three 2-hour exams, each focusing of different sections of the specification. These exams with include 2 different case studies (5 questions on each) with only 3 different command words used. Every single question will need to be applied to the context given through use of supporting evidence from the case studies.

2.1 Subject content

A-level

Paper 1
What's assessed Unit 3.1 (see section 4.6.2)
How it's assessed • Written exam: 2 hours • 90 marks • 33.3% of A-level
Questions Two case studies. Each case study will be followed by five compulsory questions worth 45 marks in total.

Paper 2
What's assessed Unit 3.2 (with links to Unit 3.1. See section 4.6.2)
How it's assessed • Written exam: 2 hours • 90 marks • 33.3% of A-level
Questions Two case studies. Each case study will be followed by five compulsory questions worth 45 marks in total.

Paper 3
What's assessed Unit 3.3 (with links to Unit 3.1 and Unit 3.2. See section 4.6.2)
How it's assessed • Written exam: 2 hours • 90 marks • 33.3% of A-level
Questions Two case studies. Each case study will be followed by five compulsory questions worth 45 marks in total.

Copy of the syllabus or a link to it

AQA Business Studies A-level Business 7138 | Specification | AQA

Access details to VLE, blogs, resources areas etc

Lesson materials will be made available through the VLE on ilesson and ilearn. Homework will be set using Assignment Manager. However, the links below could also be helpful:

Tutor2u	http://www.tutor2u.net
Tutor2u Business twitter	https://twitter.com/tutor2uBusiness?ref_src=twsrc%5Egoogle%7Ctwcamp%5Eserp%7Ctwgr%5Eauthor
Business Balls	http://www.businessballs.com
BBC News	http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business
BBC Business twitter	https://twitter.com/BBCBusiness?ref_src=twsrc%5Egoogle%7Ctwcamp%5Eserp%7Ctwgr%5Eauthor
The Times 100	http://www.thetimes100.co.uk
S-Cool	http://www.s-cool.co.uk

How the course is delivered

You will have 9 hours of Business Studies lessons per fortnight. You will have two different teachers who will deliver different aspects of the specification – delivery of the course will involve the sharing of digital resources, so all students are encouraged to have access to a suitable device (laptop or tablet) that can be used during lessons.

Departmental expectations

As a student on the A Level Business course, you will learn a variety of skills that are not only relevant to the course but will also prepare you for your future in further or higher education, training or employment.

In order to complete this course successfully, you will need to demonstrate independent working skills and be able to plan and manage your workload in order to meet deadlines. These deadlines will be set on a regular basis and will be made clear to you by your subject teacher. They are not optional. You will be expected to maintain high standards with regard to the following:

- Punctuality
- Attendance
- Equipment (Folder)
- Proactive attitude
- Professionalism
- Organisation
- Commitment
- Self-discipline/motivation
- Initiative
- Responsibility

If you are having difficulties in organising and planning your work, you must speak to your subject teacher in good time. They will do their best to help and support you in developing these essential time management skills.

Top tips for studying Business Studies

1. **Watch the news**. Business Studies is happening every day around us. Keeping up to date with what

is happening will allow you to develop real life examples of the concepts/theories that we cover in lessons. This will then help you to achieve better in class. There are also a number of social media sites that have a Business Studies focus – it is recommended that you investigate these

2. **Check your understanding as you go.** There are quite a few different models/theories that you will need to learn as part of the course. You will need to be able to describe what each model includes and how it is used (by businesses/managers), so you should check that you can do this as you progress through the course. You should also be thinking about what other (external) factors might impact/affect this model

3. **Context is key!** There will be case study materials presented in your exams. You will be expected to use this info/data within your answers. There are 4 main ways that you can help to ensure that you answer in context – by including:

   a. What the business is – the products/services that it makes/provides…
   b. Who the customers are – what do they find important? How/why do they use the business?
   c. Who the competitors are – how are they similar/different?
   d. What is the impact (of decisions/changes) – is there any financial/market data that could be used to demonstrate this?

4. **Making links between topics.** You will be expected to make links between the different concepts/theories that you have studied (to show the breadth of your understanding) – you will need to be thinking about how they might link up as you go…

5. **Evaluate.** For the higher mark questions you will be expected to evaluate the importance/significance of the concept you have been asked to consider for that business (this links in with considering the context above). You will need to think about advantages and disadvantages and then make a decision about which factors are actually the most important. To do this, you will need to ask yourself:

   a. What will the impact depend on?
   b. To what extent will this change?

Area for recording target grades & modules etc

During A Level Business Studies you will complete a number of homework and classwork tasks from each of your teachers, often based on past exam questions. This will be marked and feedback given. It is expected that you will keep this feedback in your files to learn from it for your next piece of work. This information will also be recorded on a departmental spread sheet so your teacher can monitor and advise you on your progression with respect to your target grades. This information will form the basis of the information sent home in reviews and profiles throughout the year.

Business Studies summer holiday tasks

There are 2 Summer Tasks that you need to complete, each needs to be ready for marking and discussion for your first lesson back in September. It is expected that these tasks will take approx. 5-6 hours

1. **Research following terms** (in a business context). **Include at least one example applied to UK businesses**
    a. Ethics
    b. Sustainability
    c. CSR
    d. Digital & disruptive technology, including AI

2. Case study analysis/questions

Case Study: NovaWear Ltd – Fashioning the Future?
NovaWear Ltd is a UK-based fashion retailer founded in 2016 by entrepreneur Amira Shah. The company specialises in affordable, trend-led clothing aimed at 16–30-year-olds. By 2024, NovaWear had grown rapidly through its online platform, supported by social media marketing and influencer partnerships.

Growth through Digital Innovation
A key driver of NovaWear's success has been its investment in digital and disruptive technology. In 2023, the company introduced an AI-powered trend prediction system. This system analysed real-time data from social media platforms such as TikTok and Instagram to identify emerging trends. As a result, NovaWear reduced its product development cycle from 8 weeks to just 10 days.
In addition, NovaWear adopted an AI-based inventory management system. This technology predicts demand at SKU (barcode) level, helping reduce excess stock and optimise pricing strategies through automated discounting.
However, not all stakeholders are convinced. Some employees raised concerns that increased automation could lead to job losses, particularly in design and merchandising roles.

Ethical Concerns and Supply Chain Issues
Despite its rapid growth, NovaWear has faced criticism over ethical issues in its supply chain. Investigations by consumer groups in 2024 found that some of its overseas suppliers were paying wages below the local living wage and operating in poor working conditions.
Although NovaWear responded by stating that it complies with international labour standards, campaigners argued that the company had failed to carry out sufficient due diligence.
Amira Shah commented:
"We aim to offer affordable fashion, but we recognise we must do more to ensure ethical sourcing."

Sustainability Challenges
The fashion industry is under increasing scrutiny for its environmental impact. NovaWear's fast fashion model relies on high volumes of low-cost garments with short life cycles. Critics argue that this contributes to textile waste and carbon emissions.
In response, NovaWear launched a "ReWear" initiative in 2025:

- Customers can return used clothing in exchange for store credit
- Returned items are either recycled or resold

- The company pledged to use 50% recycled materials by 2028

However, sustainability experts have questioned whether these initiatives are sufficient, describing them as "greenwashing" unless supported by deeper structural changes.

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Strategy

NovaWear publishes an annual CSR report outlining its commitments to:

- Ethical sourcing
- Reducing carbon emissions
- Supporting community projects in supplier countries

In 2025, the firm partnered with a charity to fund education programmes for garment workers' children. Despite these efforts, shareholders have raised concerns about the cost of CSR initiatives, particularly as profit margins are under pressure due to rising input costs and increased competition.

Stakeholder Conflict

NovaWear faces increasing pressure from different stakeholder groups:

Stakeholder	Concern
Customers	Affordable prices vs ethical production
Employees	Job security due to AI adoption
Pressure groups	Labour conditions and sustainability
Shareholders	Profitability vs CSR investment
Management	Balancing growth with ethical responsibility

Amira Shah must now decide how far NovaWear should go in addressing ethical and sustainability concerns without undermining its competitive advantage.

Financial data

Year	Revenue (£m)	Direct Costs (£m)	Indirect Costs (£m)	Profit (£m)
2023	72	38	25	9
2024	105	58	36	11
2025	118	69	39	10

Industry comparisons (2025)

Business	Revenue	Direct Costs %	Indirect Costs %	Profit %
TrendHive	£3.2bn	50%	32%	18%
StyleLoop	£1.9bn	55%	33%	12%
NovaWear	£118m	58%	33%	8.5%

__**Questions**__

1. **Analyse one impact for NovaWear of their use of AI technology (6)**

Technique required: One issue, with a logical chain of reasoning in context (supported by info from case study)

2. **Assess whether increased focus on ethics would improve NovaWear's overall profitability (9)**

Technique required: Develop the arguments for and against the issue (with support of info from case study) and make a judgment – this should include why some (of your previous) analysis factors are more significant than others.

*If you require any help, please contact the Head of Department, Mr Crassweller **before 10th July** using the email address below:*

toc@gryphon.dorset.sch.uk