

A review of texts for GCE A level Business Studies

THE BOOKS COVERED IN THIS ARTICLE ARE:

- 1 Barratt, M & Mottershead, A. **Business Studies, Pearson Education Limited.** Longman.
ISBN No: 0582 40547 5. 746 pages, £17.99
- 2 Barratt, M & Mottershead, A. **Business Studies Teachers Guide,** Pearson Education Limited. Longman.
ISBN No: 0 582 40546 7. 224 pages, £29.99.
- 3 Hall, D, Jones, R & Raffo, C. **Business Studies, Second Edition Teachers Guide.** Causeway Press.
ISBN No: 1 873929 89 7. 254 pages, £45.
- 4 Hall, D, Jones, R & Raffo, C. **Business Studies, Second Edition.** Causeway Press.
ISBN No: 1 873929 90 0. 776 pages, £19.95.
- 5 Hall, D, Jones, R & Raffo, C. **Business Studies - AS Level,** Causeway Press. ISBN No:1 873929 99 4. 476 pages, £13.95.
- 6 Jewell, Bruce R., **An Integrated Approach to Business Studies (fourth edition),** Longman, ISBN - 0582 40542 4; 588 pages, £17.50.
- 7 Jewell, Bruce R., **An Integrated Approach to Business Studies, Lecturer's Guide (fourth edition),** Longman, ISBN - 0582 40543 2; 215 pages, £21.99.
- 8 Marcousé, I., et al, **Business Studies,** Hodder and Stoughton, ISBN - 0 340 704 624, 646 pages, £18.99.
Marcousé, I., et al, **Business Studies Teacher's Book,** Hodder and Stoughton, ISBN - 0 340 73763-8, 277 pages, £39.99.
- 10 The Hodder and Stoughton series, £9.99 each:
Horner, D., **Accounting and Finance,** ISBN - 0 340 758 368; 184 pages
Swift, I., **Marketing,** ISBN - 0 340 75835X; 136 pages
Gillespie, A., **Competitive Environment and External Influences,** ISBN - 0 340 757 760; 184 pages.
SurrIDGE, M., **People & Organisations,** (ISBN - 0 340 77231X; 140 pages)
Gillespie, A., & Harrison, S., **Objectives & Strategy,** ISBN - 0 40 758 368; 184 pages.
Harrison, S., Swift, I., & Gillespie, A., **Operations Management,** ISBN - 0 340 779667; 152 pages.
- 11 Lines, D., Marcousé, I., & Martin, B., **The complete A-Z Business Studies Handbook, (third edition),** Hodder and Stoughton, ISBN - 0 340 77214 X; 344 pages. £9.99.

GCE Advanced level Business Studies has been in existence for just over thirty years with its popularity growing massively in the last ten. Even in the late 1980s there was a dearth of texts; Longman, for example offered teachers a choice between Susan Hammond's Business Studies which some regarded as too descriptive and the Understanding Business series which were academic and channelling but, some would argue, too dry.

"Curriculum 2000" has brought on a plethora of publications which should fully meet the needs of teachers in delivering the new A and AS specifications. Teachers can now choose the texts they feel are suitable for the needs of their students. However, restocking shelves with the books that they want may well prove an expensive undertaking. I hope that headteachers are sympathetic to the requests of their staff.

The books below are not reviewed in any particular order. The sheer volume of them received from publishers has meant that the reviews have been kept short, especially in some cases where the book has already been extensively reviewed in earlier issues of this journal.

In the introduction to **Business Studies** by **Barratt and Mottershead**, the first sentence reads, "You are probably thinking: not

another Business Studies textbook! This is not just another, it's new and has been written with you in mind at all times". Given the number of texts on the market, this is quite a claim! However, from the first page onward, it appears to be true.

The contents pages are clearly sectioned, making it easy to find the required unit. There are seven sections in all: Introduction to Business; Marketing; Operations Management; Accounting and Finance; People in Organisation; Business Environment; and Synoptic Case Study.

Each section is introduced with yet another contents page, which is perhaps a bit unnecessary. As promised, however, the book appears to have the interests of the reader in mind. Visually exciting, all the text is clearly laid out using a comfortable font size interspersed with red text to emphasise particular, essential terms. The text itself is informative and the writing straightforward. All the diagrams and photographs are clear and, unlike some textbooks, are used to support the text rather than compensate for a lack of information. Another useful feature in the main text is the "Points for Revision" sections. These provide the student with key terms and summary points from the unit.

Case studies are plentiful, clear and concise, as are the questions that litter the pages, each with a points score for

assessment. Towards the end is the synoptic case study of Ramsbottom Brewery, which nicely combines many business concepts.

If there is one thing that lets this book down, it is the insistence on a "Friday afternoon" section. Because of its name, I am not convinced that this section has the interests of the students at heart. As it implies, it is presumably designed as a teacher 'cop out' for what some might see as problematic Friday afternoon sessions. It is annoying, particularly as the sections are very useful to the student. Surely they could have been named more appropriately?

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That said, all the book's promises are duly delivered and I recommend this book highly.

The accompanying teacher's guide is superb. It begins with an overview of the format of the textbook. It briefly explains why the contents of each section have been included and why they have been compiled in the format chosen. Brief details of marking schemes, question formats and key skills for both AS and A2 are also included in the introduction.

The main bulk of the guide takes the teacher through each

unit and suggests ways to deliver the text effectively. Some may argue that this is unnecessary, but whether you choose the suggested ideas or not, it is a useful addition. There are added explanations as to why the authors have included each question found in the textbook and suggested answers for each one.

The guide is a worthwhile tool for teachers to have alongside the textbook, especially the suggested answers to questions. It gives an idea of how the new AS and A2 levels are to be marked. Overall, it is a magnificent addition for a teacher to complement a superbly written textbook.

The trio of books published by Causeway and written by Hall, Jones and Raffo are also of the highest quality.

Although not as visually appealing as others, with very bland blue print emphasising main points, they are a highly informative and useful selection of textbooks for both students and teachers. One book has been written to satisfy the requirements for AS level and one for AS and A2. The teacher's guide is an accompaniment to both and it is here that we will start.

The guide contains a useful selection of answers to the questions set in the two accompanying books. Also featured are sections explaining where, in each unit, key skills requirements can be met. With the changes in key skills

resulting from Curriculum 2000, this is a good idea, executed superbly. Other features include a list of web addresses, examination specifications for the major examination boards and additional questions for teachers to use in the classroom. An introduction to each section might have been useful, but as the guide is for teachers, it is an understandable omission.

The textbooks themselves are very good but, to this reviewer, could have been laid out a little better. Each unit is sectioned into a number of titles. These are clearly labelled but the blue print does not make the titles stand out. Font sizes are satisfactory but the pages are a bit cluttered. One excellent feature is the pointers, used to show where the reader can find additional information on a particular topic or key term in the book. However, instead of providing a page number for simple access, it gives the reader the far less useful unit number.

Questions and case studies are plentiful, easily read and challenging. Photographs, tables and diagrams are clear and understandable although on occasions a bit too small. The common addition of a selection of key terms is found at the end of each unit. These are well written, clear and concise.

What impressed this reviewer most, however, was the handy addition of a 'study skills' section for students. This unit gives valuable advice on action planning, time management, and suggestions of where to study as well as other useful directions on problem solving and the use of words. This is an excellent idea and would be especially useful to those new to post-16 education.

It provides an invaluable insight into the differences in the learning requirement from GCSE to AS Level.

Overall the trio of books is a wonderful selection of valuable resources for students and teachers alike. Whichever textbook is chosen, the appropriate teachers guide is a useful addition. The *Business Studies - Second Edition* contains both the contents of the AS level book plus the information required for the A2 qualification. For this reason it may be more cost effective for schools to purchase than the one aimed more directly at AS level.

An Integrated Approach to Business Studies by Bruce Jewell is ideally suited to those students following the new A and AS specifications.

An exemplary feature is the detail given to learning objectives at the start of each chapter. Within this section entitled 'chapter objective', specific linkage is made with the content of the previous chapter. Rather than students viewing topic areas in isolation from each other, this feature should help students see how particular topics complement each other.

In terms of focusing the reader's attention on key aspects of the text, the book makes impressive use of colour and the layout is good, resulting in a high readability factor. The clever use of bulleted points means that the reader is in no doubt as to which part of the text has significant meaning - very useful for times when one has to skim read - students revising for January exams, take note!

The book is extensive in its course coverage, having full

regard to the new specification requirements. It is not only comprehensively focused on theory, but also on the practical effect of theory on firms. In short, it is more than worthy for use as a core text, and in purchasing the student book, plus lecturer's guide with its additional focus on key skills and schemes of assessment, hard-pressed Business Studies departments will find their money well spent.

Business Studies by Ian Marcousé, already reviewed in the Spring issue 2000, is excellent value at £19. It is very well written and strong on content. The font used is perhaps a little small and the purple colour scheme needs getting used to, nevertheless, a recommended text to buy. An AS version of the text is due to be published about now, offering a potential cost saving.

The Teacher's Book is very well produced - the spiral bound format makes it easy for the teacher to use. It is well written and indeed greatly enhances the material in the students' book. The unit introductions effectively set the scene; answers to questions are thorough and appropriate. At £40 it is good value as teachers' books go.

Hodder & Stoughton's six-book series unashamedly emphasises examination preparation. Through a focus on the main business studies topic areas, the series has considerable potential for those students looking for the definitive business studies text.

Throughout the series the examination credentials of the authors are evident. In particular, their

experience is apparent within the 'markers' comments' section. Here they dissect a range of students' answers (focusing on answer content, evaluation, application and analysis) in response to particular essay questions. The 'key points' and 'fact file' segments allow the

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reader to place the theory into a context, as well as providing an additional focus for student revision.

The series scores a high readability factor. Each book is evenly balanced between the necessary theory and case context, and the reader is led through particular topics via the injection of key questions (or as termed within the books 'progress checks'). In contrast, looking for particular chapter headings is not made easy because of the large body of text and minimal number of illustrations or charts. Indeed the drabness of the pages, in marked contrast to the cover, is striking.

The emphasis on exams, although comprehensive, left me feeling that something was missing. I felt that borderline students might use the series as a 'walking stick' through their course of study, recognising the apparent examination 'pay-off' of being able to 'evaluate' and

'synthesise', but not really having a deeper understanding of what such terms really mean.

I would recommend that the series is bought as an additional weapon in a student's armoury, as he/she faces the examination battlefield. As with any weapon, however, the key is in using it appropriately. Thus a good student might dip in and out of each book as and when required, but I would be disappointed if students were to buy the series in the belief that it will be the sole focus of their study. Arguably, each book should be used in the final preparation for an examination, because their real strength lies in the consolidation of the body of knowledge that students have acquired over time. Ultimately, though, I believe the series is likely to be a success, as it taps into the exam driven culture of today's schools and colleges.

Now in its third edition, the **Hodder and Stoughton A-Z Dictionary** provides a comprehensive glossary of key terms for students studying Business. Given their success, most experienced teachers will be familiar with them. The new editions are designed to meet the different needs of Curriculum 2000, as well as updating terms by eliminating those that have fallen out of general use and introducing others that have become 'fashionable' or part of the revised specifications.

The book is extensive in its attention to detail, with key terms clearly presented. In terms of format, the authors have stuck to the conventional dictionary style layout. Each key term is highlighted in bold, with the definition following.

The authors have assumed that readers have little prior knowledge, which, in terms of readability, means that each concept is explained and pitched at an appropriate level. For those readers navigating through the books it is hard to imagine how an A to Z guide could be more user-friendly. The easy writing style 'pulls' you from page to page (leaving the reader in some ways yearning for more).

Beginning teachers will find this dictionary very useful. Of particular value are the top revision terms at the back of the book, which make planning revision lessons straightforward. These lists cover each exam board separately with a list for each module.

The book is excellent value for money and will appeal to those who are at either end of the spectrum - either those new to business studies or others who require an aid to focus final exam revision. Both books are essential additions to the teacher's or student's collection.

Overall, this year's publications create a choice which Business Studies teachers have never had before. The quality and design standards have improved greatly. For some the choice may be easy but others may face a real dilemma.

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