

Resource .

reviews

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A LEVEL BUSINESS STUDIES

Business Studies Ed. Ian Chambers and Dave Gray, Second Edition Causeway Press Ltd 1999, paperback, 776 pages, £ 18.95, ISBN 1-873929-90-0

This is a new and improved edition of a popular A level text. Much of the original style and some of the content remains but some sections have been extensively re-written and expanded. This is particularly true of the section dealing with accounting and finance which in the first edition was rather descriptive and lacking in clarity but which now guides the student to be much more analytical in their study of published accounts.

The text is divided into six

broad sections; Objectives, strategy and the business environment; External influences; Marketing; Accounting and finance; People in organisations; Operations management. Each section is further subdivided into Units which allow the user to pick and choose particular topics relatively easily. This allows the teacher or lecturer considerable freedom to plan their course according to their own preference and to meet the needs of their respective students. There is also extensive cross referencing between the Units so that when another key topic is mentioned within a Unit, it will be signposted to another Unit where it is more fully explained. This is particularly helpful in those courses involving a modular approach. It also helps to emphasise the interdependence of many aspects of business studies. There is sufficient information in the main sections to allow a thorough examination of specialist topics such as Marketing or Operations Management. The book is also clearly indexed to help the reader find key words.

The text provides a comprehensive coverage of most business courses at this level, including AS/A level, Scottish Higher Grade and Advanced

GNVQ. It could also be used as an introductory text in higher education and for some professional courses. This second edition has been specifically re-written to cover the new AS/A level Business Studies specifications and the new Scottish Higher Grade course in Business Management. In addition to the subject specific Units, there are also two additional Units on Study Skills and Assessment at the end of the book which would be helpful to both students and new teachers of the subject. As with the first edition, there is a Teachers' Guide available which gives further guidance on exactly how the book may be used for specific courses. The Guide also provides suggested answers to the questions set in the main text as well as the markschemes for the various activities and questions

The text does not just outline business theory but also acts as a workbook for students. There are a large number of questions and exercises which mostly relate to information in the Units. Most of these questions should lead to relatively short answers to test understanding of the text and act as a revision aid. Questions are based on case studies, data, short articles and photographs. At the end

of each Unit, there is a longer case study or data response question which may involve report writing or problem solving. The questions are intended to draw on information from the whole Unit. These provide useful practice for the case study style examination questions favoured by examination boards such as OCR which attempt to test the students' level of understanding, application, analysis and evaluation. On a personal note, I would like to have seen more actual examination style questions with markschemes attached in the main textbook rather than just in the Guide. A major bonus however is the boxed definitions of key words and phrases used in the Units which act as a very useful glossary. There are also brief summary questions to act as a revision aid.

One of the major attractions of this second edition is the use of cases and data based on the very latest statistics available and recent newspaper and magazine articles so that students are made more aware of recent events rather than reading a more historical view of business.. They are able to contribute much more effectively to current debates. This is clearly one of the benefits of new technology in book publishing.

The quality of presentation has been maintained and even improved from the first edition. There is good use of

colour contrast and shading, photographs and diagrams are generally clear although some diagrams attempt to cover too much detail and appear cluttered as a result. There is good variation in the shapes and positions of these figures and questions in the text. The explanation is usually clear with use of bullet points to break up the text and help the reader remember key points. The text is particularly accessible to the weaker A level student but at the same time allows the better student to be challenged.

I have no hesitation in recommending this text and it is a clear improvement on the first edition. I have used the book (first edition) for a number of years with my own students both as class text and as a source of lesson notes. It is good value for money and many students are keen to buy their own copies when funds allow. It is attractive in appearance and has good course coverage but I would still advise teachers to have a variety of texts as resources permit rather than depend solely on one text, good though this one is.

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A LEVEL ECONOMICS

The UK Economy, 1988-1998, Geoff Riley, Anforme Limited, 1998, 92 pages,

paperback, £6.95, Tel. 01661 844000, ISBN: 0 907529 44 5

Weekly Economic Briefing, Geoff Riley, Anforme Limited, 1 year's subscription £20, Tel. 01661 844000

The UK Economy, 1988-1998 is a slim volume, but packed with an amazing amount of detail. The introduction includes a quote from the June 1997 Budget statement and Financial Report, commenting that 'Too often in the past, the British economy has been subject to excessive swings in economic performance.....', and this is, in many ways, the theme of the book. It examines the performance of the main macroeconomic variables that have made the past decade such an interesting time for economists and, given the syllabus requirement that students should be familiar with events in the UK economy from the past 10 years, this is an excellent source of information. The book is divided into nine chapters, each reviewing significant events in a part of the UK economy - Economic growth; Living Standards in the UK; Inflation and Money; the Exchange Rate and so on. Each chapter is prefaced with a list of the topics that it contains, so that finding one's way around the book is fairly easy. Moreover, as well as purely factual information about the UK economy, the text gives the reader some of the key points relating to each