

Young Enterprise Examination

Examiner's Report 2021

Introduction

The 2021 YES examination faced unprecedented challenges due to the COVID-19 lockdown restrictions. Despite these exceptional constraints, the standard of grades awarded were by far the highest to date and showed that a strong level of commitment and determination had been applied by the participants.

The impact of the lockdown on performance mirrored those being experienced in the wider economy:

- Restricted business activity
- Reduced access to equipment and finance (fundraising/trade fairs)
- Team-work challenges - communication and coordination
- Remote working - alienation and stress
- Unpredictability

Despite the circumstances, the examination revealed improvement in the quality of the business ideas over previous years. The lockdown restrictions may have provided a more concentrated focus on ideas generation than previously; teams achieved successful and profitable start-ups through innovative and inventive thinking. Nothing seems to focus minds like limitations – necessity being the mother of invention:

- The closure of a school's canteen gave rise to the idea of a cookbook
- A children's book for improving mindfulness came from the perception that the lockdown was exacerbating mental health issues
- A COVID-19 related children's board game was inspired by the monotony of the lockdown
- Access to a home 3D printer gave rise to the production of a work station cable holder to solve the problem of messy tech wiring
- Tie-dye face masks, aromatic hand sanitisers and pandemic survival packs all featured in the product portfolio of the programme

One examiner commented: *'Social distancing and other lockdown restrictions created circumstances that required a level of ingenuity which would have been unthinkable twelve months ago, but groups managed it and dealt with the roadblocks successfully.'*

It was clear to examiners that all who took the exam displayed eagerness and enthusiasm, in contrast to other years where some participants appeared to be 'going through the motions' or were simply taking it because they were being told to.

The answers showed that the students read and followed the guidelines fully.

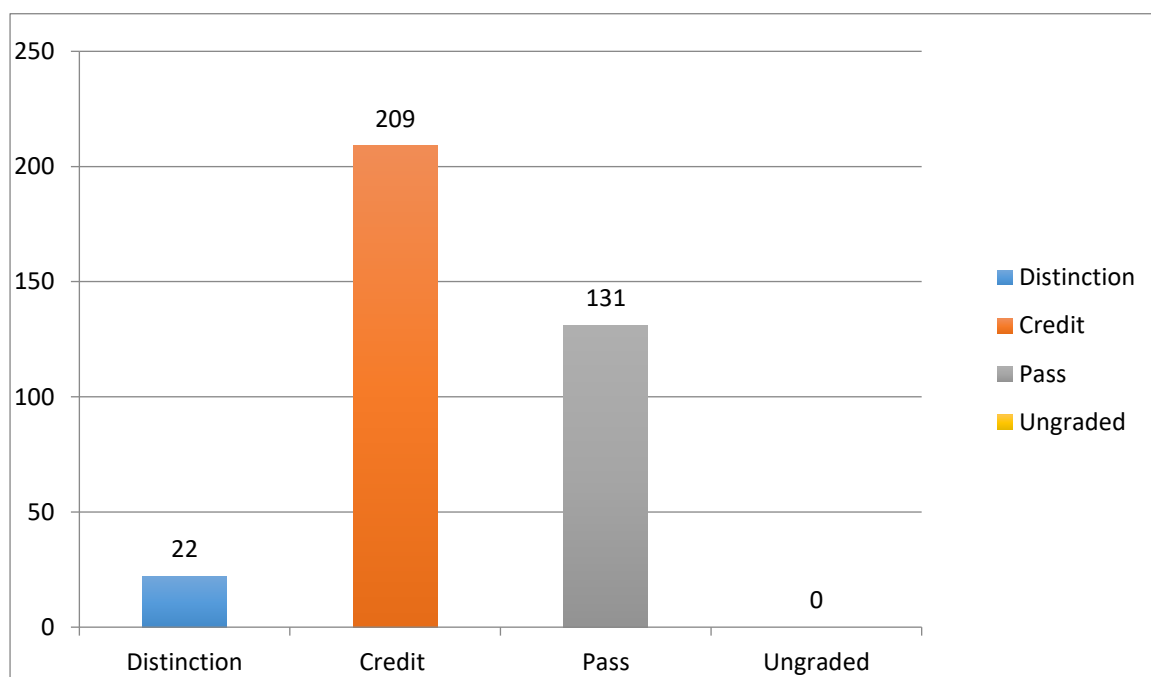
Teachers received guidance for supervision of the exam under controlled conditions. This form of invigilation may have provided increased guidance and encouragement.

The Grade Levels 2021

Table 1: Grade Breakdown by number and percentage

Distinction	22	6%
Credit	209	58%
Pass	131	36%
Ungraded	0	0%

While the total number of exam papers was lower than last year, the standard was significantly higher with no ungraded papers for the first time in the examination's history.



Over half the total of papers achieved a credit grade. A credit paper needs to demonstrate the extent of commitment and effort and have identified the tangible benefits achieved from the experience.

The papers awarded lower grades tend to provide a chronological record of events with no discussion or analysis.

Questions Answered

Table 2: Questions Answered

2021	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6
Number of Students	362	362	51	189	182	303
Percentage of Students	100%	100%	15%	52%	50%	84%

Candidates are required to answer four questions from a total of six.

Section One – Must answer both

- Q1. The role of the candidate
- Q2. Project planning/management and performance

Section Two – Any two

- Q3. Finance and company compliance
- Q4. Leadership, teamwork and networking
- Q5. Marketing and promotions
- Q6. Ideas generation and innovation

The best results were achieved by those devoting sufficient and equal time to each of the four questions. In past exams some students spent too long on the mandatory questions in Section A at the expense of the time spent on the two questions in section B - the 'running out of steam' syndrome that often beset the exam in other years. This year saw equal attention devoted to each question and is likely to be one of the main reasons for a major increase in the amount of credits awarded.

Examiners noticed a greater degree of effort and application than in other years. This may be another contributing factor in accounting for the large rise in credit grades.

Question 1

All students provided clear insightful observations about their own roles.

Many candidates would have achieved much higher marks if they had written more about their own performance and commitment. It is disappointing to read others describing how well a particular candidate contributed to the programme while the same candidate's effort and productivity was less evident in their own paper.

Question 2

This question provides the opportunity for candidates to discuss the team's performance and business planning. Most papers offer good accounts of the development and progress of their projects. Marks were lost in papers where the product was referred to as 'our product' throughout without revealing what it was. In this question it is important to state the obvious.

Question 3

This question requires discussion on finance and company compliance and continues to be by far the least popular question. Only 13% of students attempted it, even those who had been responsible for the accounting and compliance function did not attempt it. As outlined in previous reports, the subject may be seen as 'dry' or less exciting than the other choices. However, many students recognised and showed good understanding of these areas in their other answers particularly in Question 2.

Question 4

Attempted by 52% of candidates, this was the second most popular choice. Answers showed thoughtful reflection and understanding of group dynamics, conflict resolution, etc. There was also some excellent analysis of the attitudes and behaviours that define good and effective leadership.

Some candidates regarded themselves as 'born' or 'natural' leaders without providing examples of the impact of their inherent talent. But in the main most candidates expressed understanding of the importance of good social and personal skills such as empathy and willingness to compromise.

Question 5

This question was attempted by 50% of candidates. The answers showed proficiency in the application of social media as a marketing tool. Most students showed their understanding the importance of branding and customer focus. Good knowledge of the importance of the marketing concept was evident in many papers.

'We stepped into the shoes of the customer'

Question 6

The question on Ideas Generation is by far the most popular, with over 84% of candidates answering it this year. The limitations on the choice of products and services due to lockdown restrictions seem to have demanded a greater degree of focus to identify viable business ideas. Invention from restriction and seeing opportunities in problems was a common source of inspiration in this year's programme.

Distinctions

The papers achieving distinction grades all provided:

- A high degree of critical self-awareness
- A rounded and holistic understanding of their project and the key inputs and outputs
- Comprehensive coverage and consistency in all answers
- High levels of analysis and insight
- Detailed accounts of the benefits and learning gained

Conclusion

The 2021 YES examination was conducted in the midst of a challenging period but despite this, the overall quality of the examination rose to the highest standard in the examination so far.

Examiners noted:

- Exceptionally high motivation of those taking part in the exam
- The natural abilities and new- found skills of the participants identified and acknowledged
- A high level of resourcefulness displayed by teams in overcoming barriers and limitations
- Ingenuous thinking and problem solving
- Candidates achieving higher grades were more likely to discuss and understand the other roles within their team
- The YES operational framework was highlighted consistently as a valued and accessible resource.

Finally, this simple statement from one of the papers, seems to encapsulate the very ethos of the YES programme and its value to participants:

'The thought of initiating a conversation with someone new, an outside professional person, was daunting to me at first, then I challenged my fear. It proved to be extremely beneficial, not only did I gain vital information to improve product design, but I discovered my confidence in networking.'

TOP TEN PAPERS

CANDIDATE	COMPANY	SCHOOL
Molly Farquhar	SIMPLY THE ZEST	Hazlehead Academy
Aisha Farooq	STEP-UP	Belmont House School
Soraya Hossainpour	BEENATURAL	Mearns Academy
Alisa Rowlands	ELEVATE	Fortrose Academy
Phillipa Fleming	STEP-UP	Hazlehead Academy
Millie Barnes	SWOOL	Gordonstoun School
Jacob Carey	PHANTOM	The Edinburgh Academy
Mitchell Wildman	BOX S	Mearns Castle
Guy Semple	ZOINKS	George Watson's
Blayne Ratter	AFFCUTTINS	Brae High School

Appendix 1: Grades awarded by year

Year	Distinction	Credit	Pass	Ungraded
2010	3%	29%	66%	2%
2011	6%	38%	53%	3%
2012	3%	36%	56%	5%
2013	4%	28%	64%	4%
2014	3%	33%	61%	3%
2015	4%	37%	57%	2%
2016	7%	35%	57%	1%
2017	7%	42%	51%	1%
2018	8%	54%	36%	<1%
2019	8%	53%	39%	<1%
2020	4%	52%	43%	1%
2021	6%	58%	38%	0%

End of Report - Frank Dunne, Senior Examiner, April 2021