

18

School Based Assessment

18.1 The basis of the assessment

The School Based Assessment (SBA) is a very important part of your overall assessment. The SBA covers the course work followed in the Principles of Business (POB) syllabus. The syllabus will aid or help you in acquiring certain knowledge and skills associated with the POB course work.

Your SBA component of your exam is worth 40 marks, whereas Paper 01, which is a multiple choice test, is 60 marks and Paper 02, the structured essay paper, is worth 100 marks.

There are separate arrangements of a case study for private students.

18.2 The SBA requirements

The SBA is more or less a research paper where you will be expected to research and gather information to analyse and interpret.

From the foregoing, you will have recognised the importance of the SBA component as part of your overall assessment. It is intended to help you acquire certain knowledge, skills and attitudes that are associated with principles of business. The activities for the SBA are linked to the syllabus and will form a part of your learning activities. Your teacher will guide you so that your research work will help you to achieve the objectives of the syllabus.

During the course of your study for the subject, you will be able to obtain marks for competence that you develop and demonstrate in undertaking SBA assignments negotiated with your teacher. The marks you are awarded contribute to the final grade awarded to you for your performance in the examination. For this reason, it is important that you follow your teacher's guidance and that you complete any work assigned to you thoroughly and carefully. Your teacher's assessment mark will be moderated by the examiners.

Each candidate who enters for the CSEC Principles of Business examination must submit a report on a project. You may work individually or in groups. If you choose to work in a group, each candidate must be identified on the report.

The report must not exceed 1,000 words (not including appendices). You should note that wherever the report exceeds 1,000 words, 10 (ten) per cent will be deducted by your teacher.

18.3 Starting off the project

With your teacher's help, you will select and choose a topic or problem. This may include problems identified at the school canteen or stationery/tuck shop.

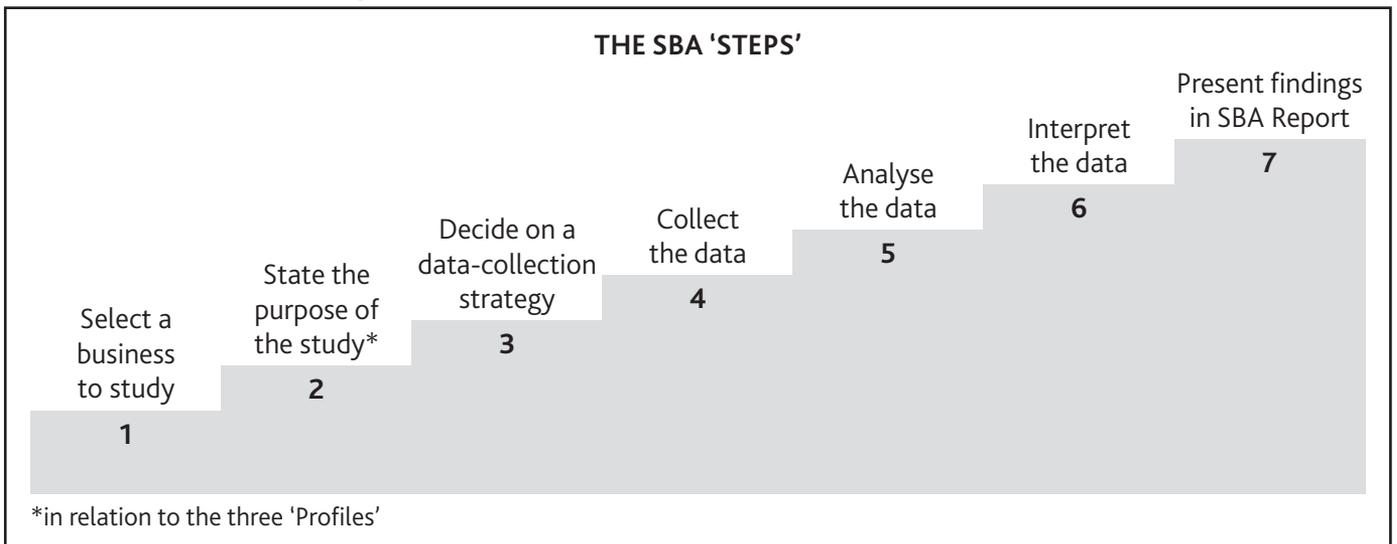
- 1 Once the topic is confirmed, formulate purpose/problem statements – what are you going to investigate and why?
- 2 Choose the business or organisation that you will be doing your research on. You also need to decide how you are going to collect your data (*methodology*). Your data may be collected from one or a combination of any of the following:
 - questionnaire
 - interview
 - reports
 - observation
 - experiments
 - documents/records.

- 3 Clearly state why you have chosen the particular topic or problem to be investigated:
 - Identify the issue, topic or problem to be investigated.
 - State the objective of the investigation.
 - Describe the methodology and instruments used to collect data.
 - Present and analyse the data.

Example (area of investigation: marketing firm)

- *Purpose statement:* The purpose of this part of the research is to determine whether there is a relationship between the advertising medium(s) used by a firm and its income.
- *Problem statement:* What is the difference, if any, between the income generated from electronic media advertising and the income generated from other forms of advertising used by a firm?
- *Hypothesis:* A greater amount of revenue is generated by a firm from advertising through electronic media than by a firm using other advertising media.

Once you have completed the above exercises of creating your purpose statement, problem statement and hypothesis related to your topic, you are ready to begin your research.



▲ Figure 18.1 The SBA 'steps'

The investigation should be a business-related topic where the following points should be addressed:

- 1 Identify the issue, topic or problem to be investigated. Choose a topic and state what it is that you intend to investigate. For example: 'an investigation into the high cost of food at the school's canteen'.
- 2 Discuss the background of the issue, topic or problem. Here you will clearly give a broad overview of the topic. Details should also be given about what the research problem is.
- 3 State the objectives of the investigation. Say what it is you hope to discover and learn when carrying out your investigation.
- 4 Describe the methodology and instruments you used to collect data. How, when and from whom did you gather your information? For example, questionnaires, interviews and so on.
- 5 Present and analyse the data. Having collected the data, write a report on it stating the facts you have identified.

- 6 State the conclusions you have come to, based on your findings. Discuss what you discovered in respect to the objectives you listed earlier. Here you will also state your limitations or any challenges you may have encountered while working on the topic.
- 7 Make recommendations (at least one) on what you would do to change things based on your findings.
- 8 Acknowledge sources (bibliography). State the sources where you acquired the information you are presenting.
- 9 Include appendices. For example, present a copy of your questionnaire, source documents, diagrams, charts, interview questions and statistical data.

18.4 Carrying out your research

Identify the issue, topic or problem to be investigated

With the aid of your teacher you will select and choose a topic or problem.

Examples of possible organisations and areas for research:

- the school canteen and stationery/snack shop
- a small business association, telephone companies, banks, a supermarket chain and so on.
- the snack shop at school events
- school projects (for Agriculture, Science, Home Economics, TVET and Junior Achievement programmes. *If you are also studying Economics and/or Accounts where you are expected to complete only one SBA including POB, you may consider one of these areas*).
- income and expenditure statements
- business plans
- published financial reports such as those found in the business section of local newspapers; statistical reports including national income statistics, balance of payments statistics, surveys of living conditions, household budgetary surveys; annual economic reports of Central Banks, Ministries of Finance and Planning Units; annual reports of firms in the region; budget speeches of Ministers of Finance or reviews of estimates of income and expenditure for Ministries of Finance
- economic information available on the internet (for example, e-commerce)
- events co-ordinated by students such as commerce events (perhaps your graduating class has a series of fundraisers)
- events co-ordinated by students such as concerts and fashion shows
- sporting and other cultural clubs at school or in the community.

The essential tasks you will need to undertake to complete your research are:

- 1 Decide what data you will need to undertake to complete your research.
- 2 Collect the data.
- 3 Analyse the data.
- 4 Draw conclusions based on the data.
- 5 Plan the report.
- 6 Write the report.

To help with your project, these six important steps are described in more detail below.

18.5 Data collection

This is a fundamental part of the project. If data is not collected, then your research questions and hypothesis cannot be adequately answered and confirmed.

Data can basically be defined as:

- 1 *Primary data*: This means that no other researcher has collected this data before you.
- 2 *Secondary data*: This means that in the past a researcher collected and used data for some purpose, but that the data can still be reused (by you) in a different way. In other words, you can examine the data from a different perspective.

Data consists of such things as:

- responses to a questionnaire or an interview or both
- reporting on events observed or experiments observed
- documents or records or physical materials.

In your study of the organisation, you may use a combination of the various data-collection methods outlined above. However, it is important to ensure that the data is relevant to your study. Never collect data just for the sake of collecting data.

Let us now examine in more detail some of the data-collection methods just described. It is up to you to decide (possibly with guidance from your teacher) which of the following instruments will be useful to your particular research.

18.6 Questionnaire

A questionnaire is a list of research or survey questions put to those who responded to your questionnaire (the respondents). It is one of the most common instruments used in the collection of data for research projects. A questionnaire is a method of collecting data and information from a sample of people. These people are often representative of a particular segment of society.

For example, a sample of shoppers in a supermarket could be questioned to determine their opinion of its products and services. The questions to be posed must be pre-formulated, put into a certain order and written down, so that each shopper is faced with exactly the same questionnaire. This makes your analysis of their responses easier.

You need to be clear in advance about what you are trying to find out. Target your questions to obtain the information you want. Avoid leading questions. These are questions that suggest answers, an example being, 'This is a good supermarket, isn't it?'

The questions you ask may be either 'open-ended' or 'closed'. If they are closed, the person responding gives a simple answer without making comments. Thus, the answer could be a straightforward 'yes' or 'no' (to a question like, 'Do you think the service in this supermarket is good?'). The answer could also be given by ticking a box (for example, if you are rating the service of the supermarket as 'good', 'fair' or 'poor'). Closed questions invite a limited response, but they make the questionnaire easier to complete. If, on the other hand, the question is open-ended (for example, 'What aspects of the service in this supermarket appeal to you?'), then the person is asked to give a full answer. This allows them to explain themselves more, but at the same time, it makes your analysis of their response less straightforward.

A questionnaire is easy to use if carefully formulated. People can complete it themselves, or you, as the researcher, can ask questions and fill in the appropriate sections yourself. However, you may find that some people do not like to answer questionnaires that are too long. For this reason, you must ensure that the instructions and questions are clear, simple and precise. They should only have one possible meaning. Also, make the questionnaire itself as short as possible.

Often the questionnaire has to be left for the respondent to fill out, so you may need to visit the respondents or call them by phone in order to retrieve it.

Once you have developed your questionnaire, ask your teacher or supervisor to check it.

18.7 Interview

An interview is a meeting of people where the person asking the questions is the interviewer and the person answering the questions is the interviewee. In this sense, it is very similar to a questionnaire. Again, the questions put to the interviewee must be carefully formulated so the information gained is unambiguous.

The interview is a common method used to collect data. This involves questioning people about their opinions of certain topics or issues. But there is a subtle difference – an interview is less formally structured than a questionnaire, taking the form of questions and discussion with the person being interviewed encouraged to respond in a more natural way. The interviewer, in turn, may ask a more varied range of questions. The questions asked need not necessarily be the same for all interviewees, but instead can be formulated to suit the person being interviewed. This allows the interviewer to investigate more deeply the interviewee's particular views. The questions asked will also probably change as the interviewer goes on, for example if the interviewee raises an interesting point and the interviewer decides that they would like to investigate that point further.

The interviewer may need to audio-record the interview in order to transcribe and analyse the responses later. Before any attempt is made to audio-record an interview, always seek the permission of the interviewee. In the absence of an audio recorder, the interviewer will need to make full notes of the interviewer's responses. This can be demanding, but is worthwhile.

18.8 Observation and participation

Some researchers find that observing an event taking place, or actually participating in an event, is also a useful way of collecting data.

Observation is designed to help the observer get information about an organisation or a group of people, by simply watching how they go about their business and listening to their conversations and interactions. The observer records what they see and hear by carefully choosing a particular location in order to monitor events. Audio-recording and video-recording are, therefore, useful observation tools, if they are available. The essence of observation is that the observer does not interfere in events – they watch and listen from the sidelines.

The advantages of observation are that you can make judgements about how an organisation or group works based on what you see. The conclusions you draw will be entirely your own – whereas with an interview or a questionnaire, your conclusions are based on what other people said to you.

Participation is another way of observing but this time you observe the actions and behaviour of a group or organisation from within. In other words, the observer assumes a role inside the group or organisation being observed. Participation gives the researcher the opportunity to learn, from practical experience and a 'hands-on' approach, the working methods and behaviour of those being studied.

Points to remember when undertaking an observation or participation:

- Record as much as possible of what you see and hear.
- If you do not clearly understand what you have observed or participated in, seek clarification from someone within the group or organisation.
- In participatory observation, the observer could become so involved that they forget the aim of the exercise. Be alert if you choose to gather data in this way.

Introductory section

It is important to keep this as clear but as precise as possible, bearing in mind the need to keep within the prescribed overall word limit.

Title Page

This page should include your name, registration number, the name of the subject and the date presented, and of course the title of your chosen theme.

Methodology

This is a brief summary of the report. It gives the busy reader information on what was investigated and how the study was carried out, as well as the main findings, conclusions and recommendations.

Acknowledgements

This is where you show gratitude and say 'thank you' to those who provided assistance with the research.

Table of Contents

This gives clear and straightforward information on what the report contains rather similar to the contents section of this text.

Other sections

Your final report must be typed and presented electronically. It should also comprise the following in the order prescribed by the syllabus. Your teacher will offer you guidance on this.

- Topic, issue or problem being investigated.
- Objective of the project – the objective should be related to the project topic, issue or problem.
- Background to or overview of the topic, issue or problem.
- Methodology – data collection and instrumentation.
- Presentation and analysis of data.
- Conclusion.
- Recommendations.
- Bibliography.
- Appendices.

18.12 Mark scheme for research projects

Your project will be marked out of 40 and weighted as follows:

Knowledge and Comprehension (KC): 10 marks

Application (A): 20 marks

Interpretation and Analysis (IA): 10 marks

Project areas	Profile distribution			
	Knowledge and Comprehension	Application	Interpretation and Analysis	Total
Table of contents <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Table of contents accurately links pages to content – 1 mark (KC) 	1			1
Topic/issue/problem <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Topic/issue/problem is clearly stated – 1 mark (KC) Topic/issue/problem accurately describes the project – 1 mark (KC) 	2			2
Objectives <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Objectives are clearly stated and linked to the topic/issue/problem – 1 mark (A) Objectives are realistic – 1 mark (A) 		2		2
Background/overview <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Includes a description of the topic/issue/problem, including its history – 1 mark (KC) Description includes the development – 1 mark (KC) Establishes the need for research: why/how the topic/issue/problem is important to the student – 1 mark (A) An overview of the impact of the topic/issue/problem on society – 1 mark (A) 	2	2		4
Methodology <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data collection instrument clearly described – 1–2 marks (KC) Data collection instrument appropriate for the type of data – 1 mark (A) Includes at least two instruments of data collection – 1 mark (A) Method of data collection clearly described – 1–2 marks (A) Method of data collection adequately justified – 1–2 marks (A) Limitations of data collection method clearly stated – 1–2 marks (A) 	2	6	2	10
Presentation and analysis of data <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data are presented in an appropriate form using tables, charts, graphs – 1–2 marks (KC) Data presented are relevant to the objectives of the project – 1–2 marks (A) Data are adequately analysed – 1–2 marks (A) Data are analysed using appropriate statistics, e.g. mean, median, mode – 1–2 marks (A) Findings are consistent with analyses – 1–2 marks (A) 	2	4	4	10
Conclusion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conclusion succinctly summarises the project – 1–2 marks (A) Conclusion is logical and based on findings – 1–2 marks (A) 		4		4
Recommendation(s) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recommendations are realistic and informed by findings – 1–2 marks (IA) Recommendations contribute to a better understanding of the topic/issue/problem 			2	2
Bibliography <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bibliography contains the names of authors, name of publisher(s) and names and dates of publication, and are written in alphabetical order – 1 mark (KC) 	1			1
Overall presentation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consistently uses correct spelling and grammar – 1 mark (A) Expression of ideas is logical and unambiguous – 1 mark (A) 		2		2
TOTAL	10	20	10	40