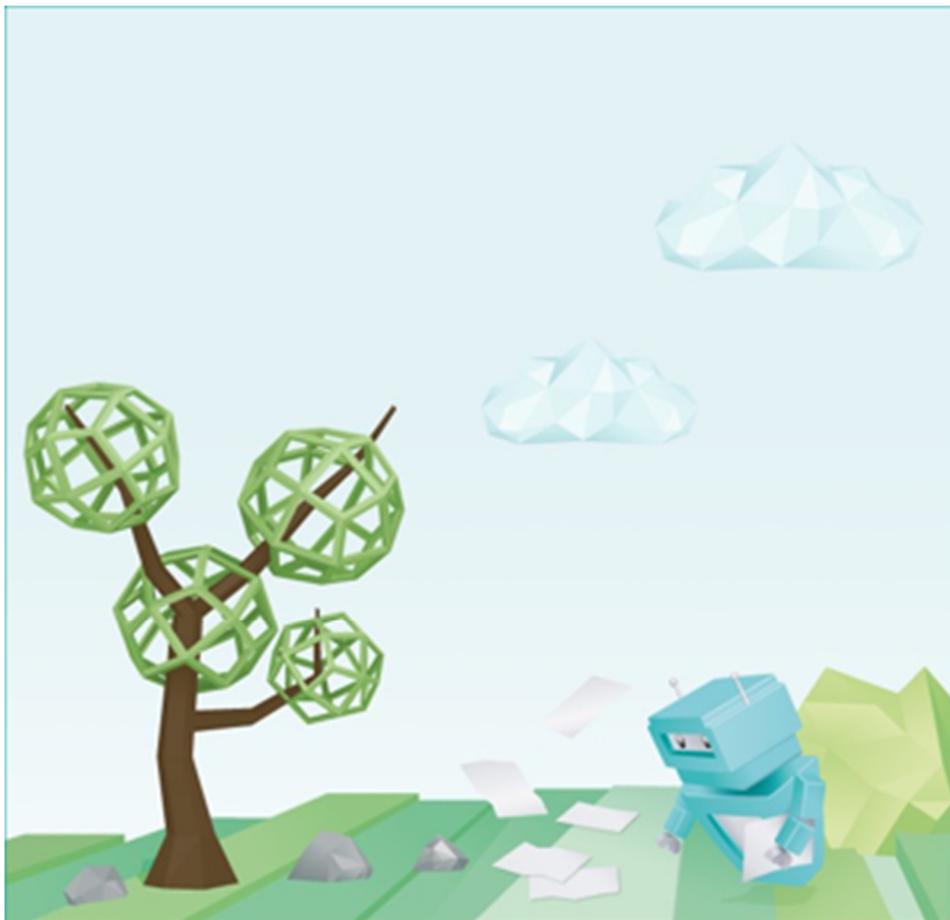


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Business

How to get an A1 in the Leaving Cert
Business Exam



by **Michael R.**

Michael R got an A1 in his higher Leaving Cert Business paper. He's now doing Dental Science in Trinity College Dublin. Here he shares what he learned.

Business is a modern, real world subject. It the most popular business subject and is widely regarded as the easier of the three, but with only 3.8% of candidates attaining an A1 grade in the 2016 exam, it's clear there are numerous pitfalls. The exam is three hours long and is broken into three sections; short questions, the applied business question and the long questions. Just like the real world business environment, the Leaving Cert Business exam is always changing. Candidates are now more frequently expected to apply what they have learned to a particular scenario, rather than simply regurgitate the facts learned directly from the text book. Hopefully this guide will be of some help to you for the exam come June!

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What should my study technique be?

Business is one of the bigger courses in the Leaving Certificate and the textbook is quite large. The theory isn't overly complicated however, so with an effective and efficient study technique, you are well on your way to a good grade! It is your job as a student to condense the information from the textbook into sizeable chunks. Here are a few simple methods that I used when studying Business that I found particularly useful:

- **Notes:** When studying Business, it is important that you write out your own notes from the textbook. This is called *active learning* and is far more efficient than just reading the book alone. Studies show that **you remember 10% of what you read but 60% of what you write**. What I did was, when I had written out the notes, I closed the text book and tried to write out the notes again afresh. This will show you what you know and don't know.
- **Colour:** Highlight key words and write sections with different colour pens. The brain is more sensitive to different colours and this makes you more likely to remember the most important information.
- **Exam Papers:** Try and answer questions from exam papers or *Studyclix* as often as possible. This should only be done after a chapter has been studied as it will give you a taste of a real exam situation. Make sure to check the marking scheme afterwards, it will show you where marks are awarded and what the examiner is expecting from you. Similarly, if your teacher assigns you a question for homework, study the material first and then answer the question without your notes. I found that this is the most effective way of learning all the material.
- **Prioritise:** As the Applied Business Question (ABQ) will be asked on specific units (e.g. 4,5,6), the units you study in your particular year of study should be at the core of your studies because the material from these units will appear in the short and long questions too.



- **Resources:** Make good use of online resources such as *Studyclix* and *examinations.ie*. The Chief Examiner's Report which was released this year on the *examinations.ie* website will show you exactly what the examiners are looking for. Likewise, keep an eye out on the discussion forum on *Studyclix* and feel free to answer any questions people may have there, as **explaining concepts to people who don't understand them is always an effective form of study.**
- **Current Affairs:** Listen to the news on a regular basis. Much of the news is in fact relevant to the Business course. Take for example the Volkswagen emissions scandal which was mentioned on last year's paper. By having previous knowledge of these things you will be more capable of thinking critically about them in an exam situation and coming up with advantages/disadvantages etc. in a question.



How do I do Section 1 - Short Questions?

There are 10 questions in this section. You must answer 8 of them and they account for 20% of your overall mark. These questions come from all the units on the course. I would advise answering all 10 questions if possible as some short questions can be answered quite quickly and you are more likely to get higher marks in this section as a result. The questions are usually made up of 2 points (5+5) or (4+6) This is by far the easiest and the quickest section of the exam. Each correct answer is worth 2.5% of the overall exam.

- **Timing:** You should spend no more than 25-30 minutes on this section. This leaves 3-4 minutes on average to answer each question.
- **Acronyms:** Make of list of all the acronyms such as DIRT, PAYE, IDA, etc. as you make your way through the course, more often than not, there is a short question on these.
- **Definitions:** Examiners are looking for clear, concise information in the short questions. **Do NOT write longer than the lines that are provided** as it means that you are not being concise enough. By learning off definitions, you will get straight to the point. Try and offer an example when suitable as it shows the examiner that you understand what you are talking about.
- **Ratios:** Ratios regularly appear in this section. It is worth learning them as once you know them they are very easy marks to pick up!
- **Practise, Practise, Practise:** You should aim to complete a set of 10 short questions every week between now and the exam. A lot of the questions tend to reappear so if you have practised them enough, you should have no problem here.



How do I do Section 2 - Applied Business Question (ABQ)?

This question, worth 20% is compulsory and involves applying business theories to a text concerning a particular business. It must be remembered that the answer is actually there on the page and you must structure your answers. Most of the marks lost here are due to an incorrect answering style.

- **How to Style:** There seems to be different ways of doing this but I generally followed to form of
1) State, 2) Explain, 3) Link to text, 4) Outcome verb.

1) **State** - A clear heading e.g.
“Manpower Planning”

2) **Explain** - Explain what is meant by the heading, e.g. “Manpower planning is the process of estimating or projecting the number of personnel required for a project with different skillsets over a predefined period of time.”

3) **Link to text** - This involves taking a direct quote from the text that demonstrates the particular business theory.

4) **Outcome Verb** - You must answer the question that has been asked. For example, if the verb used was “Evaluate” you must give your own opinion of the business concept with reference to the text.

- **Using Highlighters:** I brought 3 different coloured highlighters into the exam for the ABQ. I would assign each highlighter a particular question in the ABQ and would then proceed to highlight all the content in the passage relevant to that question with that particular highlighter. This saved me a lot of time as I didn’t have to go looking for the information once I had found it.



- **Watching your Timing:** You should not spend more than 40 minutes on this question. After 10:40 am on the day of the exam you should have completed both the ABQ and the Short Questions. In comparison to the long questions, there are fewer marks going for this question so you must move on if you have exceeded the 40-minute time frame. Divide this 40 minutes up in accordance with the marks awarded for each individual question.
- **Be Aware of the Marking:** The SEC tend to mark the ABQ in an un-traditional way. Usually in the long questions, you get 5 marks for every one point made, but this is not always the case, especially in the ABQ. Take for example, question 1 of the 2016 ABQ:

“Ryan Cullen has developed effective management skills.”

Would you agree with this statement?

Yes (3 marks)

Outline reasons for your answer, with reference to the text of the ABQ.

3 x 9 marks (3m(name) + 3m(explain)+ 3m(Link))

30m (3m+27m)

Here, marks were given for answering “yes” to the question asked. Candidates were then expected to realise that there were only 3 management skills that could be dealt with effectively in this question which meant that it wasn’t going to conform to the traditional marking system.



How do I do Section 3 – Long Questions?

This section is worth 60% of your overall mark. You must answer 4 long questions. One from Part 1, two from Part 2 and any other question. Each question is based on a particular unit(s).

Part 1)

Q1 - Unit 1

Q2 - Unit 6

Q3 - Unit 7

Part 2)

Q4 - Unit 3

Q5 - Units 4 or 5

Q6 - Units 4 or 5

Q7 - Unit 5

- **Timing and Marking:** Generally, every 5 marks means that you must make one relevant point. You should spend about 2 minutes making one point which means that you should spend 24 minutes on each long question as each long question is worth 60 marks. The answers do not need to be too long. **Use bullet points and be concise and direct to the point. Waffling gets no marks!**
- **Read and Understand all Questions:** Before choosing a particular question to do, read every part of the question. There is no point doing a question just because you know the answer for the first part. By reading the question beforehand, you will be saving valuable time. **I would recommend reading each question carefully twice to understand what is being asked.** When you understand the question, briefly plan out your main points to avoid having to think on the spot when writing the question. This again will save time.



- **Structure your Question:** All of your answers should follow the following format:
 - 1 - Clear Heading of Business Concept.
 - 2 - Explain the Business concept briefly.
 - 3 - Example. Offer an example of where this business concept is used in the business world.
 - 4 - Outcome Verb. Remember to answer the question that has been asked. Here are a few outcome verbs:
 - *Evaluate* - Give your opinion at the end of the answer
 - *Outline* - Briefly explain the clear heading
 - *Analyse* - Give advantages and disadvantages
 - *Compare/Differentiate* - Examine 2 or more ideas to show the similarities and differences.
 - *Illustrate* - Explain with an example.
- **Mini ABQ Questions:** In recent years, there have been short business related stories attached to the long questions. You are expected to reference these stories in your answers to obtain top marks.
- **Reverse questions:** Sometimes a question may be asked in a different way to how you may have learned it. For example, if you learned about the advantages of teamwork but the questions may ask about the disadvantages of having employees working alone. Here, you would be expected to apply what you know to the question.
- **Tip:** Personally, I would recommend to **stick with the questions that are either right or wrong**, such as break-even graphs, ratios, tax calculations etc. These questions have a smaller chance of being subjective and are more likely to get you higher marks.



Some Final Tips

- If you are doing the French or History exam the day before the Business exam, make sure that you **get a good night's sleep and eat some nutritious food**. There is really no benefit in cramming the night before. The course in Business is rather long, therefore you must **study consistently throughout the year** to get a good grade.
- Don't panic if you can't answer a question. Take a deep breath and tell yourself that you know the answer, **you put in the work and you can do it!** If you start to get worked up in the exam, then you could ruin your mindset for other questions, so really don't let one question throw you off.
- Try and **keep your work neat and tidy**. Start every question on a new page. Just like when you're studying - use different colours and highlighters. This will all make your work easier to read and the examiner is more likely to give you marks if they can see what you are doing.





*Finally, I would like wish you
the best of luck in the exam!
You will be fine. 😊*

