Business at Norbury High

Overview

A Level Business gives students a broad understanding of how businesses operate, make decisions, and respond to change. It covers key areas such as marketing, finance, human resources, and operations, along with strategy, leadership, and the external environment. Students learn how businesses start, grow, and compete, using both quantitative and qualitative data to analyse performance and support decision-making. The course focuses on applying theory to real business situations, including financial analysis, market trends, and strategic evaluation.

The new AQA specification (7137/7138) for exams from June 2027 onwards reflects modern business trends, with greater emphasis on digital technology, sustainability, ethics, and globalisation, including the impact of AI and data analytics. Overall. the course develops critical thinking and analytical skills, helping students understand how businesses create value in competitive and changing markets.

KS5 A Level Business
Students will sit 3 papers at the end of the two year course in year 13.

Year 12

During year 12 Students will cover Unit 3.1 and part of Unit 3.2

3.1 Unit: What is business? Managing marketing and finance

- **3.1.1 Business and objectives**
  Students will explore why people start businesses, the characteristics of successful entrepreneurs, and the challenges they face. They will also examine the purpose of business plans, the importance of competitiveness, and the factors that influence business decisions, including risk, reward, ethics, and opportunity cost. Finally, students will learn about business objectives and how SMART objectives help businesses achieve success and growth.

- **3.1.2 Forms of business and stakeholders**

  This section introduces students to different forms of business ownership, including sole traders, private and public limited companies, co-operatives, and social enterprises. Students will compare these structures in terms of control, objectives, sources of finance, profit distribution, and liability. They will also explore share ownership, including why people buy shares, what influences share prices, and the impact of share price changes.In addition, students will develop skills in calculating and analysing key financial measures such as market capitalisation, dividends per share, and dividend yield. The section also covers stakeholders, including internal stakeholders (employees and owners) and external stakeholders (customers, suppliers, communities, and governments), and how business activities affect these groups alongside the ethical responsibilities businesses have towards all stakeholders.

- **3.1.3 Marketing management**

  This section introduces students to the key principles of marketing and how businesses respond to customer needs. Students will study market research, including primary and secondary data, and develop skills in analysing information such as market size, share, sales, and demand. They will explore different markets (B2B, B2C, C2C), segmentation, targeting, and the difference between niche and mass markets. The topic also covers the marketing mix (product, price, place, promotion) and digital marketing tools such as social media, SEO, PPC, CRM, data analytics, and AI. At A-level, students also study international marketing and how businesses adapt the mix globally, along with ethical issues in marketing decisions.

- **3.1.4 Financial management**

  This section introduces students to the role of finance in business and the importance of managing financial resources effectively. Students will explore key financial objectives such as profit, profitability, cash flow, liquidity, and borrowing, and how these influence decision-making and competitiveness, along with links to marketing, operations, and HR.

  They will study internal and external sources of finance and evaluate their suitability for different situations. The topic also develops analytical skills through break-even analysis, budgeting, cash flow forecasting, and financial reporting, including key measures such as profit margins, liquidity ratios, gearing, ROCE, and ROI. Students will interpret financial statements and analyse financial data to assess performance against objectives, competitors, and the wider business environment. At A-level, they will also consider ethical issues in finance, such as tax avoidance and payment terms, while developing skills for informed financial decision-making.

3.2 Unit: Managing people and operations

3.2.1 People management

- This section introduces students to human resource management and its role in business performance. Students will explore HR objectives such as employee numbers and skills, turnover and retention, engagement, costs, and equality, diversity, inclusion, and belonging, as well as the factors that influence these objectives. They will study HR planning, including recruitment, training, retention, redeployment, and redundancy, alongside different forms of employment and flexible working arrangements.

The topic also covers workforce planning, HR data, and performance measures such as productivity, sales per employee, and employee cost ratios, using data analysis techniques like percentages and index numbers. Students will examine organisational design, leadership styles, teamwork, motivation theories, reward systems, employee wellbeing, and employer–employee relations. Finally, they will consider ethical issues in HR, including equality, diversity, inclusion, pay gaps, and codes of conduct, and how HR decisions impact overall business competitiveness.

3.2.2 Operations management

This section introduces students to operations management and how businesses convert inputs into goods and services efficiently. Students will explore key objectives such as efficiency, quality, output, flexibility, and environmental impact, and how these are influenced by business aims and conditions. They will also consider how location decisions are made based on costs, demand, resources, infrastructure, ethics, and environmental factors.

Students will study operations data and KPIs such as productivity, costs, capacity utilisation, delivery times, defects, and customer satisfaction to assess performance. They will also learn ways to improve efficiency, quality, and sustainability using methods such as lean production and quality management systems. The topic also covers supply chain management, inventory control, and matching supply to demand, along with innovation, project management, economies of scale, and the role of technology in improving operations. At A-level, ethical issues in operations such as sourcing, product safety, and environmental impact are also considered.

Year 13

Student will complete unit 3.2 and cover unit 3.3

3.2.3 Managing business culture

This section explores business values and culture and their importance in shaping how a business operates. Students will consider the purpose and significance of business values, and how culture is influenced by factors such as leadership, employee values, leadership style, mission, reward systems, organisational structure, and customer expectations.

They will examine the impact of both positive and negative business cultures, including how culture affects motivation, performance, and decision-making. Students will also study why businesses may need to change their culture and the challenges involved in doing so. Finally, they will explore how business culture can influence competitiveness and overall business success.

3.3 Unit: Business and society, business and the external environment, and business strategy

3.3.1 Business and society

This section introduces students to sustainability in business and its importance in long-term decision-making. Students will explore environmental sustainability, including waste reduction, resource efficiency, emission control, and sustainable sourcing, as well as social sustainability, such as fair treatment of workers, ethical sourcing, and supporting local communities. They will also consider economic sustainability, focusing on long-term profitability without damaging resources or people, and the challenges businesses face when trying to implement sustainable practices. The Triple Bottom Line framework (People, Planet, Profit) is also examined.

Students will study Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), including its purpose and value, Carroll's CSR pyramid, and the difference between a shareholder and stakeholder approach. They will also consider the difference between genuine CSR and public relations strategies such as greenwashing and bluewashing.

Finally, students will explore Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) reporting, including key measures such as emissions, health and safety, resource use, community investment, and board composition. They will evaluate how improving ESG performance can benefit a business and its stakeholders.

3.3.2 Business and the external environment

This section introduces students to the competitive environment and the external factors that influence business activity. Students will study Porter's Five Forces model, including rivalry, buyer power, supplier power, threat of new entrants, and threat of substitutes, and examine how the strength of each force affects business competitiveness. They will also explore how businesses can influence and respond to these forces in a changing market.

Students will consider the political and legal environment, including trade agreements, protectionism, consumer and employee protection, competition policy, and environmental regulation, and how these create opportunities and threats for businesses. They will also study the economic environment, including GDP growth, taxation, inflation, interest rates, exchange rates, and unemployment, and how businesses respond to changes in these factors. The topic also covers the social environment, including demographic changes, consumer values, and activism, as well as the impact of technological change, including digital innovation and artificial intelligence.

3.3.3 Strategy

This section introduces students to business strategy and planning, focusing on how businesses assess performance and make long-term decisions. Students will explore how marketing, finance, HR, and operations data, along with quantitative and qualitative analysis, support strategic decision-making. They will study key strategic tools such as mission, vision, objectives, SWOT analysis, stakeholder mapping, the Ansoff Matrix, and positioning strategies, and consider how these influence business choices. The topic also covers how strategies are implemented, reasons for loss of competitiveness such as strategic drift, and investment appraisal methods including payback, ARR, and NPV.

Students will also examine business growth (organic and inorganic), methods such as mergers, acquisitions, franchising, and integration, as well as challenges like retrenchment. Finally, they will consider global and digital strategy, including international expansion, glocalisation, and how digital transformation affects competitiveness.

3.3.4 Change

Students will examine why businesses change, how stakeholders are affected, and why resistance to change occurs, along with methods for managing it such as Lewin’s Force Field Analysis. They will also explore different types of business risk and ways of managing them, including planning, insurance, diversification, and cybersecurity. In addition, students will consider how businesses deal with uncertainty through scenario planning and becoming more agile using flexible structures, empowered employees, and cross-functional teams.