

This GROUP task is worth 30% of your final grade – please begin your research early. **Limit 2,000 words.**

Your task is to undertake a strategic analysis of a small to medium business (less than 50 people – no subsidiaries or franchises).

Your case study must be structured with the numbered sections, and information as detailed in the format as follows.

1. **Executive Summary**– summary of report analysis, implications, options and recommendations (one-page max – approx. 250 words) **(10 marks)**
 - *Write this last. This should be able to be read and understood independent of the rest of the study i.e. should be a complete summary of the study.*
 - *It needs to explain the purpose of the study i.e. what was the study investigating and what was it trying to find out. Also what were the main findings, why were they important and what does that mean for the firm.*
 - *Don't include recommendations here but you can mention there are recommendations. Typically the Exec' summary is placed before the table of contents.*
2. **Introduction & background** – Describe the purpose and background to the business - its stakeholders, primary activities, culture, values and goals; location and leadership etc. (approx. 250 words) **(15 marks)**
 - *You need to begin by explaining the purpose of the report i.e. what is the point of this case study? Then you need to give a background of the business so we know what you're talking about (include here primary activities, possible structure, leadership team and key stakeholders).*
 - *Presenting the culture, values, goals and purpose of the firm is important. You don't need to know what these are exactly in reality but having a basic understanding of what the firm does (activities and culture) will be enough for you to make up something appropriate and logical.*
3. **Strategic Analysis** (aims to inform the question 'where are we now?') (approx. 50 words)

Provide an introduction explaining the importance of the areas of consideration and the purpose of the analysis.

 - 3.1 External environment analysis (approx. 400 words) **(15 marks)**
 - 3.1.1 Macro/general environment -> key drivers
 - *You will need to use a PESTEL to deduce the key drivers – remember to justify why they are significant for a firm assessing its strategic position i.e. potential to impact long term competitive advantage?*
 - 3.1.2 Industry -> lifecycle, competitive forces, industry issues
 - *We expect to see Porter's Five Forces as well as consideration of the industry lifecycle.*
 - 3.1.3 Competitive -> customers, competitors, critical success factors (CSF)
 - *A competitor analysis is needed to help deduce CSF*
 - 3.1.4 Summary of opportunities and threats with respect to the firms' external environment and its strategic agenda, and justification using theory of why those factors are strategically significant over other significant external factors (opportunities and threats)
 - *How does your EFAS look? What is it saying as a summary of key external factors? The point of this section is also for you to recognise these external dimensions are not separate but interconnected. As issue at one level may be exacerbated or mitigated by issues at other levels. Is the overall external environment complex or dynamic or simple or stable or what and why?*
 - 3.2 Internal organisational analysis (approx. 400 words) **(15 marks)**
 - 3.2.1 Resources and capabilities (i.e. key to value creation & strategic advantage)

- Remember unique resources and key competencies are what contribute to distinctive capabilities – what is the firm relying on to build its strategic position? What does VRINE suggest for your firm?

3.2.2 Stakeholders and governance (i.e. key to strategic decisions)

- Who does the firm need to satisfy and why? Who are key? How (what policies and procedures) do you think it has in place to ensure that it does? Or it could look like it has none! Explain how you think it is for your firm, either way.

3.2.3 History, culture and leadership (i.e. relevant to current and future situation)

- How do you think the firm has got to where it is? Is it path-dependent in some way? What is the style of leadership and how does that effect the culture? How does it look? Is it innovation, empowered, controlled or what? Can a culture web give you insights into the way things are done?

3.2.4 Summary of significant strengths and weaknesses with respect to the firms' internal situation and its strategic agenda, and justification using theory of why those factors are strategically significant over other key organisational factors (strengths and weaknesses)

- How does your **IFAS** look? What is it saying as a summary of key **internal** factors? The point of this section is for you to recognise the internal environment is an integrated operational entity and these important areas are not separate but interconnected. As issue in one area may be exacerbated or mitigated by issues in other area. Is the overall internal environment effective or efficient or functional or chaotic or what and why?

4 **Synthesis and interpretation** of key strategic issues 'Where are we now?' (approx. 350 words) (15 marks)

Provide a brief introduction (one or two sentences is enough) explaining your rationale for the synthesis and interpretation.

4.1 Synthesis of internal and external analyses to provide an integrated view of the firm's current situation. Justify your synthesis by explaining **how** the significant external factors influence the internal situation and how is the internal situation important in dealing with the external factors.

- In section 4 you need to bring the evidence from your internal analysis (IFAS) and external analysis (EFAS) together (synthesis) to create your **SFAS** (Strategic Factor Assessment Summary) which will be the basis of your discussion in section 4.1.

4.2 Interpretation of the value and relevance of the integrated strategic analyses relative to 'where the firm is now' and justification supported by theory or real-world examples as to why taken altogether the findings are important for its current situation.

- This is where you will interpret 4.1 relative to the purpose, values and goals of the firm i.e. does the analysis align with the intention (purpose, values and goals) of the firm?

4.3 Identify three (3) KEY issues from your synthesis and provide justification for each, detailing why is each strategically significant and how it represents a challenge or opportunity for the firms LONG TERM competitive advantage.

- The key issues (**NOT** key drivers!) must be identified from the analysis you have done on the firm. You can support their importance with references from the literature, but they must be grounded (drawn from/found in) the analysis of your business case.
- From the discussion in 4.2 you will be able to find three key issues for section 4.3 that seem to be significant for the firm's long-term competitive advantage given its situation i.e. 'where are they now?'

5 **Conclusion & Recommendations** – (approx. 300 words)

- Provide an insightful, succinct and persuasive summary about the key findings from your report, leading to outstanding recommendations and their STRATEGIC importance and implications.
- These should provide as the basis for the recommendations (no more than 5) you present here.

(10 marks)

6 **References** – Provide sound and appropriate support for the ideas and discussion in your work with **10 ACADEMIC PEER-REVIEWED journal articles from strategic management literature** (10 marks)

Note: Professional English language, grammar and spelling, coherent style, and required formatting (10 marks)