

Chapter 30: Exam practice question

Production at BMW

1 Define the following terms:

a flow production (2)

This is the production of items in a continually moving process. It is also known as job production. Products move from stage to stage of the production process as soon as they are ready. Flow production systems are able to produce large quantities of output in a short period of time.

b job rotation. (2)

Workers do not do the same tasks all the time; they are part of a group of workers who swap tasks. This makes their job more interesting and can increase motivation. It does, however, mean that more training is needed, which may be costly, and it depends on worker and union flexibility.

Apply **Resources table 3a** mark band descriptors.

2 Analyse **two** disadvantages BMW may have encountered using flow production. (6)

Disadvantages may include:

- worker boredom
- higher staff absenteeism
- higher staff turnover
- any other relevant point.

SL: apply **Resources table 1** mark band descriptors.

HL: apply **Resources table 2** mark band descriptors.

A justified conclusion is **not** required.

3 **(HL)** Explain the characteristics of cell production. (6)

- flow production is split into team working
- job rotation (see above)
- team make production decisions: empowerment
- team entrusted with meeting wider targets than would be the case in ordinary flow production

SL: apply **Resources table 1** mark band descriptors.

HL: apply **Resources table 2** mark band descriptors.

A justified conclusion is **not** required.

- 4 **(HL)** Discuss the advantages and disadvantages to BMW of switching from flow production to cell production. **(9)**

Advantages:

- increased social interaction can motivate workers
- absenteeism and staff turnover may fall
- empowerment can be motivating
- the people making production decisions are those who know most about production
- teams have more of a stake in what they do
- any other relevant point

Disadvantages:

- increased social interaction may slow down productivity
- more training can be time consuming and more costly
- depends on worker flexibility
- managers in some cultures may not like delegation of decision-making
- managers may have less direct or immediate knowledge of problems
- any other relevant point

HL: apply **Resources table 2** mark band descriptors.

For 9-mark questions a conclusion is usually required.