



OCR – A Level Economics

Component 1 – Microeconomics

4. Market structures Worked Examples

Contents

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- Market structures
- Perfect competition
- Monopolistic competition
- Oligopoly
- Monopoly

Market Structures

Exam Style Question 1

X-inefficiency is most likely to exist in markets where

[1]

- A New firms have recently entered the market
- B There are long-term patents in place
- C There is a high level of contestability
- D The conditions for price discrimination are not met
- E Concentration ratios are low

Answer

☐

Explanation [3]



Market Structures

Exam Style Question 1

Answer:



Correct answer: B – there are long-term patents in place [1]

Explanation:

X-inefficiency happens when a firm's costs are **higher than they should be** because there's a **lack of competition**. Without rivals pushing them to improve, firms can afford to be a bit lazy or inefficient. [2]

Patents are a form of legal barrier that protect a firm's ideas, products, or processes. They **stop other firms from copying**, and that means **no new competition** can enter the market easily. [1]

With no pressure from rivals, there's **no reason for the existing firm to reduce costs**, improve productivity, or innovate, and that's exactly when **x-inefficiency creeps in**.

Market Structures

Exam Style Question 2

A firm selling snack food at a music festival is operating in market conditions of monopolistic competition. It is likely to be

[1]

- A Allocatively efficient in the short run and productively efficient in the long run
- B Allocatively efficient in the long run and productively efficient in the long run
- C Both allocatively and productively efficient in the long run
- D Neither allocatively nor productively efficient in the long run
- E Both allocatively and productively efficient in the short run

Answer

☐

Explanation [3]



Market Structures

Exam Style Question 2

Answer:

✓ Correct answer: D – neither allocatively nor productively efficient in the long run [1]

Explanation:

In **monopolistic competition**, there are **many firms** in the market, and each sells a **slightly differentiated product**, like different snack stalls at a music festival offering burgers, tacos, or fries. [1]

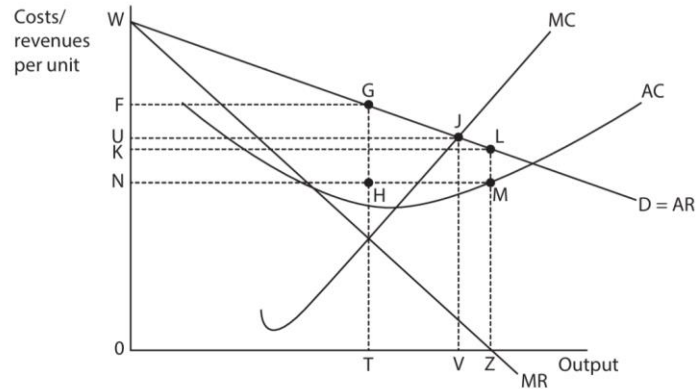
The firm is **not allocatively efficient** because **price is greater than marginal cost ($P \neq MC$)**. This means it's not producing at the point where resources give maximum benefit to society, so, not welfare-maximising. [1]

It's also **not productively efficient**, as it's **not producing at the lowest point on its average cost (AC) curve** → $AC \neq MC$. So, it's not minimising costs either. [1]

Market Structures

Exam Style Question 3

The diagram shows the costs and revenues for a firm with monopoly power.



Which of the following statements is true?

[1]

- A At output T the firm is revenue maximising
- B At output V the firm is allocatively efficient
- C At output Z the firm is productively efficient
- D At profit maximising output the supernormal profits are KLMN
- E At output Z the price is zero

Answer

Explanation [3]



Market Structures

Exam Style Question 3

Answer:

✓ Correct answer: D – At profit maximising output the supernormal profits are KLMN [1]

Explanation:

Allocative efficiency happens when:

Price = Marginal Cost ($P = MC$ or $AR = MC$)

This means the value consumers place on the good (shown by the price) is equal to the cost of the resources used to make it, so society's welfare is maximised. [1]

A **monopoly** is a single firm that has a 25%+ market share. [1]

At **output V**, the **AR (demand) curve** intersects the **MC curve**, which means:

Price = Marginal Cost so **Allocative efficiency**.

Even though this is unusual for a monopoly (they usually set higher prices and restrict output), it might happen if:

- The government forces **marginal cost pricing**
- Or if the monopoly is trying to maximise welfare for some reason. [1]

Perfect competition

Exam Style Question 4

Assume a firm is operating under conditions of perfect competition. The market price is above the firm's average cost. Which of the following are the most likely long run consequences for this firm?

[1]

- A Its price will fall, and it will increase output
- B Its price will fall, and it will decrease output
- C Its price will rise, and it will increase output
- D It will keep its price and output unchanged
- E It will shut down and exit the industry

Answer

☐

Explanation [3]

Perfect competition

Exam Style Question 4

Answer:

✓ Correct answer: B – Its price will fall, and it will decrease output [1]

Explanation:

In perfect competition there are **lots of small firms selling the same product**. No firm can set its own price, they are **price takers**. In the short run, firms can **make supernormal profits**. [2] However, this attracts new firms into the market because they want a piece of the profits. As more firms enter, supply increases, market price falls and **profits shrink until all firms just make normal profit** (price = average cost). [1]

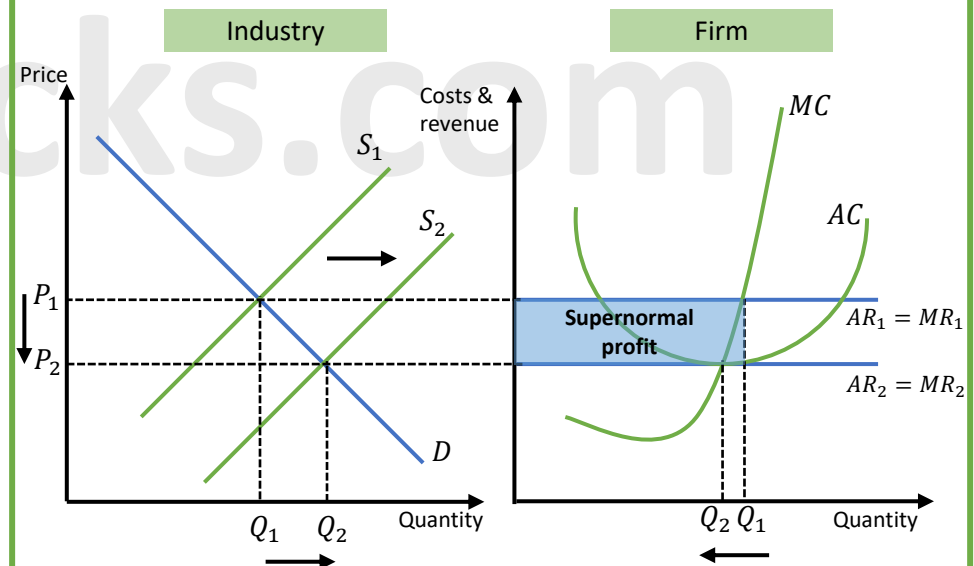


Diagram [3 marks]

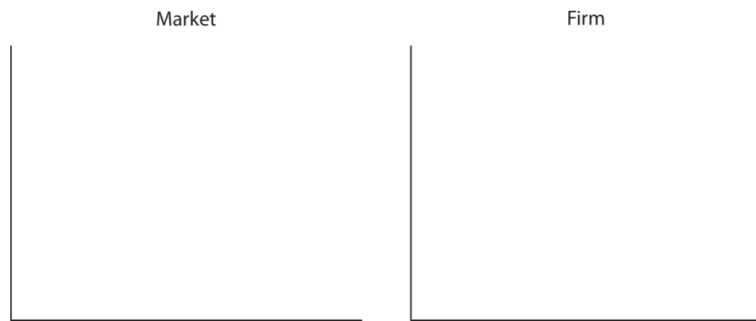


Perfect competition

Exam Style Question 5

In Sicily, many household's can grow lemons of the same quality as each other. Chiara decides to sell lemons at her local market, expecting to make a normal profit. She notices that all of the many lemon sellers are charging exactly the same price.

(a) Draw diagrams showing the equilibrium positions for both the lemon market and a typical firm in the long run.



[4]

(b) Which **one** of the following will exist in the short run if Chiara makes a loss?

[1]

- ☐ A Allocative efficiency and productive efficiency
- ☐ B Allocative efficiency and productive inefficiency
- ☐ C Allocative inefficiency and productive efficiency
- ☐ D Allocative inefficiency and productive inefficiency

Perfect competition

Exam Style Question 5

Answer:

(a) Draw diagrams showing the equilibrium positions for both the lemon market and a typical firm in the long run.

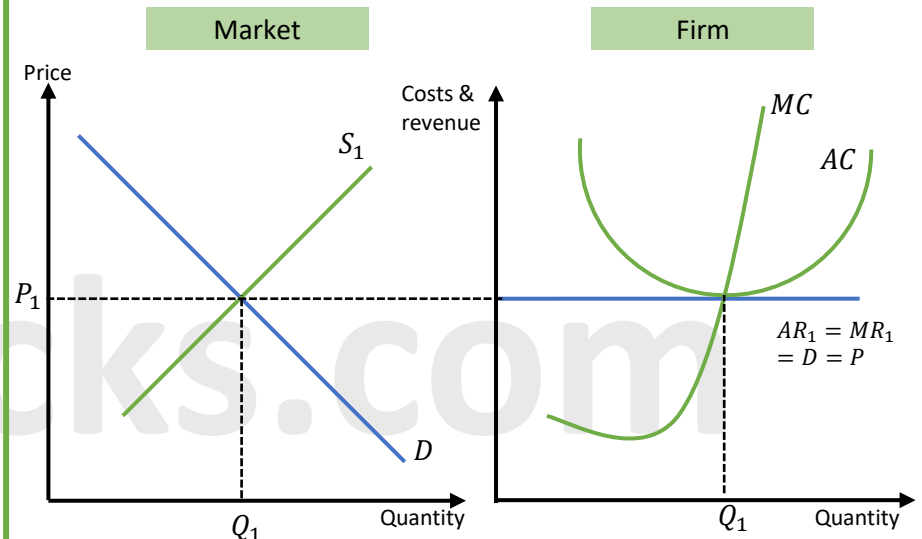


Diagram [4 marks]

(b) Which will exist in the short run if Chiara makes a loss?

Correct answer: **B — Allocative efficiency and productive inefficiency**

Reasons:

- **A incorrect** because the firm is not operating at its minimum point on the AC curve.
- **C incorrect** because $P=MC$ so the firm is allocatively efficient.
- **D incorrect** because of the reasons given in A and C.

Perfect competition

Exam Style Question 6

A firm faces the following cost and revenue schedule. (Spaces have been left for your working.)

Output per day	Total revenue (£)	Average revenue/ Marginal revenue (£)	Total cost (£)	Average cost (£)	Marginal cost (£)
0	0		12	–	–
1	10		22	22	10
2	20			14	
3	30			11	
4	40			10	
5	50			10	
6	60			13.5	

The firm is attempting to maximise profit. From this information it can be concluded that the firm is operating under conditions of

[1]

- A Monopolistic competition in the short run and will operate at 4 units
- B Monopolistic competition in the long run and will operate at 5 units
- C Perfect competition making a supernormal profit at an output of 1 unit
- D Perfect competition making a supernormal profit at an output of 3 unit
- E Perfect competition making normal profit at an output of 5 units

Answer

Explanation [3]

Perfect competition

Exam Style Question 6

Answer:



Correct answer: E – Perfect competition making normal profit at an output of 5 units [1]

Explanation:

Normal profit = when **total revenue = total cost** (including opportunity costs). The firm is doing just well enough to stay in the market; not gaining, not losing. [1] At **5 units** TR = TC = £50. Profit = £0, this means the firm is making normal profit.

Perfect competition = many small firms, identical products, no pricing power, easy entry and exit. [1]

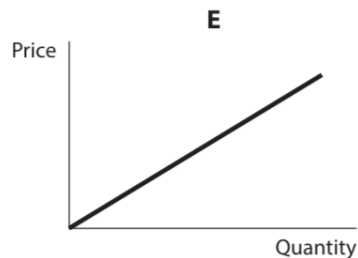
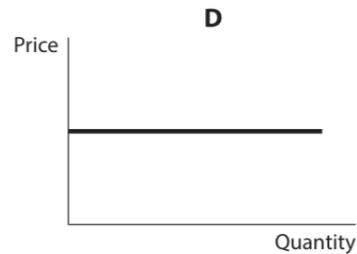
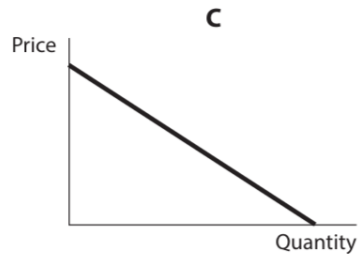
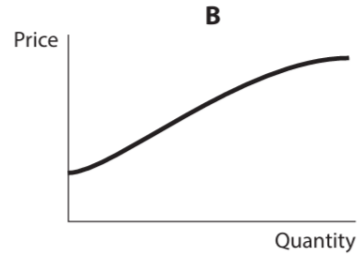
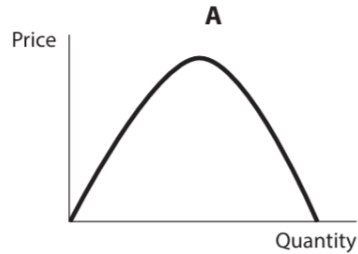
Output per day	Total revenue (£)	Average revenue/m arginal revenue (£)	Total cost (£)	Average cost (£)	Marginal costs (£) $\left(\frac{\Delta TC}{\Delta Q}\right)$
0	0	-	12	-	-
1	10	10 (10/1)	22	22	10
2	20	10 (20/2)	28 (14x2)	14	6
3	30	10 (30/3)	33 (11x3)	11	5
4	40	10 (40/4)	40 (10x4)	10	7
5	50	10 (50/5)	50 (10x5)	10	10
6	60	10 (60/6)	81 (13.5x6)	13.5	31

Complete diagram 1 mark.

Perfect competition

Exam Style Question 7

Which one of the following diagrams could depict average revenue for a firm operating in a perfectly competitive market?



Answer

☐

Explanation [3]



Perfect competition

Exam Style Question 7

Answer:

✓ Correct answer: D [1]

Explanation

Perfect competition: Many firms, identical products, easy entry/exit, no pricing power. [1]

In a **perfectly competitive market**, a firm is a **price taker**, it has **no control over price**. [1] It must sell its product at the **market price**, no matter how many units it produces.

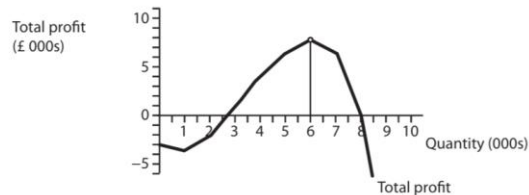
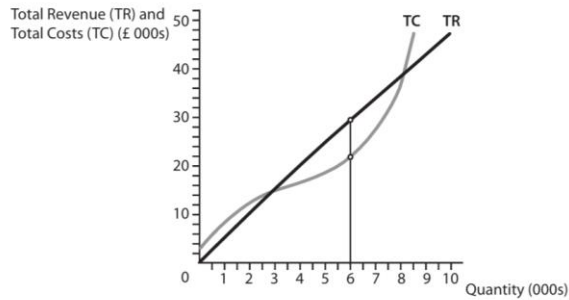
That means its **average revenue (AR)** [which is just **total revenue divided by quantity (TR/Q)**] stays the same at all levels of output. [1]

Average Revenue = Price = Demand

So, the **AR curve is perfectly elastic; a horizontal line**. [1]

Perfect competition

Exam Style Question 8



The diagrams show the costs, revenue and profit for a profit maximising firm. What can be inferred from these diagrams? [1]

- A The firm operates in a perfectly competitive market in the short run
- B The firm will produce at a quantity of 6,000 units in the long run
- C There are barriers to entry and exit
- D The firm will produce at any output between 2,650 and 8,000 units
- E The firm is making a loss

Answer

☐

Explanation [3]



Perfect competition

Exam Style Question 8

Answer:

✓ Correct answer: A - The firm operates in a perfectly competitive market in the short run [1]

Explanation

The **total revenue (TR)** curve is a **straight line with a constant gradient**, meaning **price is constant [1]**, this suggests the firm is a **price taker**. [1]

That's a **hallmark of perfect competition**, where the firm accepts the market price and cannot influence it.

The **total cost (TC)** curve shows increasing costs, and the **gap between TR and TC** is biggest at 6,000 units → that's where **profit is maximised**.

The **total profit** graph peaks at **£8,000**, confirming the firm is making **supernormal profit**. [1]

In **perfect competition**, firms **can make supernormal profit in the short run** because:

- Not enough firms have entered yet
- There's not yet full adjustment in the market

Monopolistic competition

Exam Style Question 9

According to the Royal Mail, more hair and beauty salons opened on UK high streets last year than any other types of independent business, with a net increase of 10%, representing 626 new salons.

(Source: adapted from <https://www.theguardian.com/small-business-network/2016/nov/18/beauty-boom-or-bust-uk-too-many-salons>)

(a) The UK hair and beauty industry is an example of monopolistic competition because:

[1]

- A Firms spend nothing on advertising and research
- B The industry is dominated by a few large firms
- C The products are homogenous
- D There are low barriers to entry and exit

(b) Draw a cost and revenue diagram to show the **long-run** equilibrium of a firm in monopolistic competition. [4]

Monopolistic competition

Exam Style Question 9

Answer:

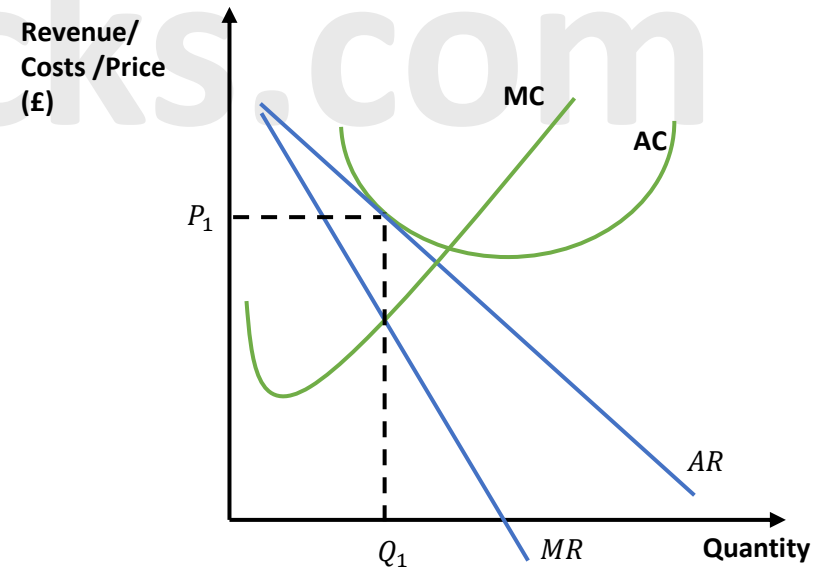
✓ Correct answer: D – There are low barriers to entry and exit. [1]

Option A ✗ Firms **do** spend on advertising and branding, salons especially.

Option B ✗ The market isn't dominated by a few large firms, there are **many** small, independent ones.

Option C ✗ The products aren't **homogeneous** each salon tries to be a bit different with its look, service, or niche.

(b) Draw a cost and revenue diagram to show the **long-run** equilibrium of a firm in monopolistic competition. [4]



Monopolistic competition

Exam Style Question 10

Which of the following characteristics is shared by a monopolist and a firm operating under conditions of monopolistic competition?

[1]

- A Low or no barriers to entry to the industry
- B Productive efficiency in the long run
- C Some degree of price setting power
- D Supernormal profits in the long run
- E Allocative efficiency in the long run

Answer

☐

Explanation [3]



Monopolistic competition

Exam Style Question 10

Answer:

✓ Correct answer: C – Some degree of price setting price [1]

Explanation

Both **monopolists** and firms in **monopolistic competition** share one key trait: They're not price takers, they're **price setters**.

So, they both face a **downward-sloping demand curve** (or Average Revenue curve), which means:

- They can **raise or lower their price** and **still sell their product**
- They're not forced to charge the market price like in perfect competition [1]

A **monopolist** is a firm that dominates the entire market. It's the only seller, so it has **strong price-setting power**. [1]

A firm in **monopolistic competition** is one of many sellers, but each offers a slightly different product, like barbers, cafés, or bakeries. This **differentiation** gives them a bit of control over price. [1]

Monopolistic competition

Exam Style Question 11

A firm in long run equilibrium under monopolistic competition will be

[1]

- A Allocatively but not productively efficient
- B Productively but not allocatively efficient
- C Productively and allocatively inefficient
- D Making supernormal profits
- E Allocatively and productively efficient

Answer

☐

Explanation [3]

Monopolistic competition

Exam Style Question 11

Answer:



Correct answer: C – Productively and allocatively inefficient [1]

Explanation

A firm in **monopolistic competition** is one of many sellers, but each offers a slightly different product and therefore the demand is not perfectly elastic. [1]

Productive efficiency = producing at the **lowest point** on the average cost curve (AC).

Allocative efficiency = when **price = marginal cost ($P = MC$)**. This is where society's wants are met perfectly, we're not overproducing or underproducing.

Firms face a **downward-sloping demand curve** because of product differentiation (each business offers something a bit unique).

That means price is **always greater than marginal cost ($P > MC$)** → not allocatively efficient. [1]

Firms also don't produce at the **minimum point on the average cost curve** → not productively efficient. [1]



Oligopoly

Exam Style Question 12

The following table shows global sales of PCs by company in 2015.

Company	Sales of PCs (million)
Lenovo	57 182
HP	53 534
Dell	39 049
Apple	20 794
Acer Group	19 680
Others	86 461
Total	276 700

(Source: IDC, reported in *The Times*, 14th January 2016)

Calculate the five-firm concentration ratio. You are advised to show your working. [2]



Oligopoly

Exam Style Question 12

Answer:

To calculate the **five-firm concentration ratio**, we need to work out how much of the total market is controlled by the **top 5 firms**.

Step 1: Add the sales of the top five firms

$$57,182 + 53,534 + 39,049 + 20,794 + 19,680 = 190,239 \text{ million}$$

Total market sales = 276,700 million

Step 2: Calculate the concentration ratio:

$$\text{Five-firm concentration ratio} = \left(\frac{190,239}{276,700} \right) \times 100$$
$$\text{Five-firm concentration ratio} = 68.76\% \approx \mathbf{68.8\% [2]}$$

Oligopoly

Exam Style Question 13

The following table shows the sales (millions) of tablet computers in quarter 3, 2012 and quarter 3, 2013:

- (a) The 3-firm concentration ratio in quarter 3, 2012 was 59.2%. Calculate the 3-firm concentration ratio in quarter 3, 2013 in the market. You are advised to show your working. [2]

Sales of tablets (millions)		
Manufacturer	Quarter 3, 2012	Quarter 3, 2013
Apple	14.0	14.1
Samsung	4.3	9.7
Asus	2.3	3.5
Lenovo	0.4	2.3
Acer	0.3	1.2
others	13.5	16.8
Total	34.8	47.6

(Source: <http://appleinsider.com/articles/13/10/30/ipads-marketshare-drops-11-in-q3-on-lack-of-new-models-android-posts-significant-gains>)

- (b) It can be deduced from this data that the tablet computer market is:

- A Monopolistically competitive
- B Perfectly competitive
- C Oligopolistic
- D A natural monopoly

- (c) Explain **one** barrier to entry that is likely to exist in the tablet computer market. [2]

Oligopoly

Exam Style Question 13

Answer:

- (a) Calculate the 3-firm concentration ratio in Quarter 3, 2013

 **Top 3 firms in Q3 2013:**

- Apple = 14.1 million
- Samsung = 9.7 million
- Asus = 3.5 million

 **Step 1: Add their sales**


$$14.1 + 9.7 + 3.5 = 27.3 \text{ million}$$

 **Step 2: Divide by total sales and convert to a %**

$$(27.3 \div 47.6) \times 100 = \sim 57.35\%$$

 **Answer:** The 3-firm concentration ratio is **57.4%** (rounded to 1 decimal place). [2]

- (b) What type of market is this?

 The correct answer is: **C – Oligopolistic** [1]

 **Explanation:**

An **oligopoly** is a market dominated by a few large firms exactly what we see here. The top three firms (Apple, Samsung, and Asus) control over 57% of the market. That's a strong indicator that a few big players are holding most of the power, which is classic oligopoly behaviour.

- (c) Explain **one** barrier to entry in the tablet market

Barriers to entry are obstacles that make it difficult for new firms to enter a market. One major **barrier to entry** in the tablet market is **high start-up costs**. [1] New firms need to invest **huge amounts of money** into, product development & design, advertising & building brand recognition, etc... [1] All of these make it tough for small or new firms to join the market and compete effectively.

Oligopoly

Exam Style Question 14

The following matrix shows the possible revenue outcomes (£ per day) for two firms tendering for contracts to supply in-service training programmes to local authorities. Assuming Hanna Ltd and Jax Ltd have colluded, and agreed a price that will give each a revenue of £1000 per contract, what subsequent actions would lead to a revenue of just £800 per contract?

[1]

		Hanna Ltd	
		High price	Low price
Jax Ltd	High price	1000 / 1000	600 / 1200
	Low price	1200 / 600	800 / 800

- A Both firms set a high price
- B Hanna Ltd sets a high price and Jax Ltd sets a low price
- C Jax Ltd sets a high price and Hanna Ltd sets a low price
- D Collusion breaks down
- E The firms engage in tacit collusion

Answer

☐

Explanation [3]



Oligopoly

Exam Style Question 14

Answer:

✓ Correct answer: D – Collusion breaks down [1]

Explanation

Collusion – When rival firms agree (formally or informally) to avoid competition by fixing prices or limiting output. [1]

In the matrix, both **Hanna Ltd** and **Jax Ltd** originally **colluded** and agreed to charge a **high price**, which gave them each **£1000** in revenue per contract. This is shown in the **top left cell** of the matrix. [1]

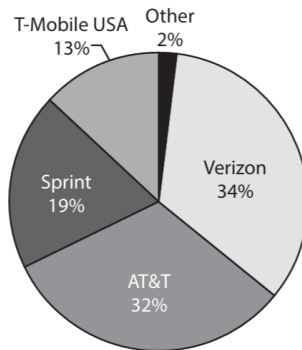
But now they're both earning **£800** and this happens when both **set a low price** (bottom-right cell). So, what went wrong?

Collusion has broken down. This means that although they initially agreed to work together to keep prices high, at least one of them chose to "cheat" and undercut the other, likely to grab more market share and profits for themselves. [1]

Oligopoly

Exam Style Question 15

The diagram shows the market share of the cell [mobile] phone market in the USA.



In August 2014, after a failed attempt at a merger, a price war broke out between T-Mobile USA and Sprint. Under which market conditions are such price wars most likely to occur?

[1]

- A Monopolistic competition in the short run
- B Monopolistic competition in the long run
- C Markets where there is a low concentration ratio
- D A low degree of interdependence between firms
- E Oligopoly

Answer

☐

Explanation [3]



Oligopoly

Exam Style Question 15

Answer:

✓ Correct answer: E – Oligopoly [1]

Explanation

A **price war** happens when firms keep undercutting each other by lowering prices to gain more customers but in the process, everyone's profits take a hit. This kind of situation is **classic oligopoly behaviour**. [1]

An oligopoly is a market dominated by **a few large firms**. These firms have **interdependent decision-making**, meaning one firm's pricing decision affects the others, so if one drops prices, others feel pressured to follow. [1]

You can clearly see that four firms (Verizon, AT&T, Sprint, T-Mobile USA) make up **98%** of the mobile market in the USA, that's a **high concentration ratio**, which is another sign of an oligopoly. [1]

In oligopolistic markets, **firms are watching each other closely**. If one lowers prices, others will respond to protect their market share. After the failed merger, T-Mobile and Sprint started cutting prices to stay competitive therefore, a **price war**. [1]

Oligopoly

Exam Style Question 16

Early in the morning on 19 September 2013, Microsoft revealed that the price of its new games console Xbox One would be £429 in the UK. Later that day, Sony announced that its new PlayStation 4 games console would be sold for £349 in the UK.

One possible reason why Sony chose to price its product significantly lower than Microsoft was because

[1]

- A It has first mover advantage
- B It wanted to undercut Microsoft and take a large market share
- C It wanted to benefit from relatively price-inelastic demand
- D It was colluding with Microsoft
- E It had higher sunk costs in developing the new games console

Answer

☐

Explanation [3]



Oligopoly

Exam Style Question 16

Answer:

✓ **Correct answer: B – It wanted to undercut Microsoft and take a large market share [1]**

Explanation

Market share refers to the proportion of the sales relative to other firms. [1]

Undercutting is a classic move in a competitive market with **interdependent firms** (meaning each firm's decisions directly affect the others) as a way to increase sales. [1] Microsoft revealed their price **first**, so Sony had the upper hand in responding. Since the products are **close substitutes**, price becomes a key factor and a cheaper option is very attractive to consumers. [1]

From a game theory angle if **both firms charge a high price**, they get equal, decent revenue.

But if one undercuts, they **gain market share and revenue**, while the other **loses out**. [1]

✗ **Why not the other options?**

- **A (First mover advantage)** – Microsoft moved first, not Sony, and that put them at a disadvantage.
- **C (Price-inelastic demand)** – In this market, demand is **price-elastic**, consumers are sensitive to price changes.
- **D (Colluding)** – There's zero evidence of that. If they were colluding, they would've agreed on the same price!
- **E (Higher sunk costs)** – That would usually push the price **up**, not down.

Monopoly

Exam Style Question 17

A profit maximising monopolist operates at the output level where:

[1]

- A Average revenue equals average cost
- B Total revenue is at a maximum
- C The price is equal to the marginal cost
- D The price is equal to the marginal revenue
- E The marginal profit is zero

Answer

☐

Explanation [3]

Monopoly

Exam Style Question 17

Answer:

✓ Correct answer: E – The marginal profit is zero [1]

Explanation

A **profit-maximising monopolist** is all about squeezing out as much profit as possible. They stop producing more units **when the extra money they make from selling one more unit (marginal revenue)** is exactly the same as **the extra cost of making it (marginal cost)**.

👉 This is the golden rule: $MR = MC$.

But, that option's not there directly... So, what does this mean for profit?

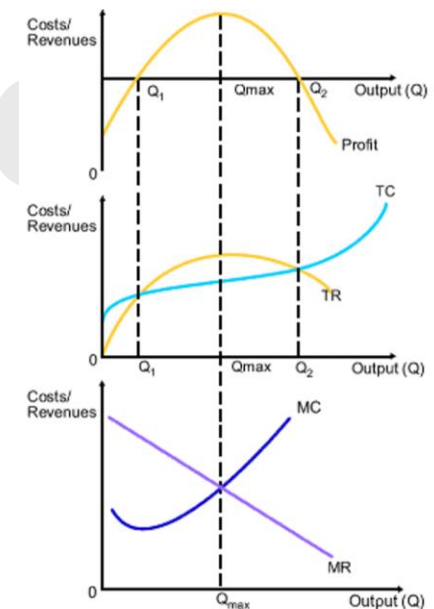
Well, **marginal profit** is literally:

Marginal Revenue – Marginal Cost

So, when $MR = MC$, that means:

Marginal Profit = 0 [1]

Diagram [2 marks]



Monopoly

Exam Style Question 18

Amtrak is the sole provider of long-distance rail passenger travel in the US. The most likely reason why Amtrak has no competition is that:

[1]

- A Sunk costs are low
- B There are falling long run average costs in the US rail passenger industry
- C Demand for rail travel is increasing
- D X-inefficiency is high
- E Consumers' surplus is always higher when there is a sole provider of a product or service

Answer

☐

Explanation [3]



Monopoly

Exam Style Question 18

Answer:

✓ Correct answer: B – There are falling long run average costs in the US rail passenger industry [1]

Explanation

This is a classic case of a **natural monopoly** which occurs when one firm can supply the entire market at a **lower average cost** than if there were multiple competing firms. [1] Why? Because of **economies of scale**; as output increases, the average cost keeps **falling**. [2]

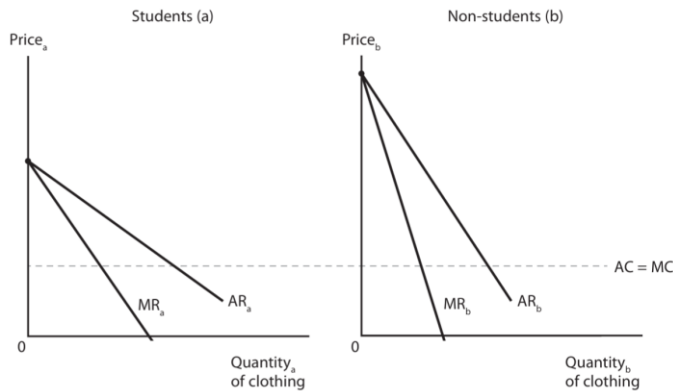
In rail travel, building and maintaining infrastructure like train tracks, stations, and trains is super expensive which also includes high sunk costs. [1] But once it's all set up, the **cost per passenger** drops as more people use it. That's exactly what "**falling long run average costs**" means.

Monopoly

Exam Style Question 19

River Island is a clothing retailer. Students are offered a River Island student discount code to benefit from a 10% price reduction as an attempt by the firm to increase profit.

- (a) Complete the third-degree price discrimination diagram below. Draw the impact on each sub-market by showing the price and profit. [4]



- (b) Which **one** of the following is necessary for a firm to be able to practise price discrimination?

[1]

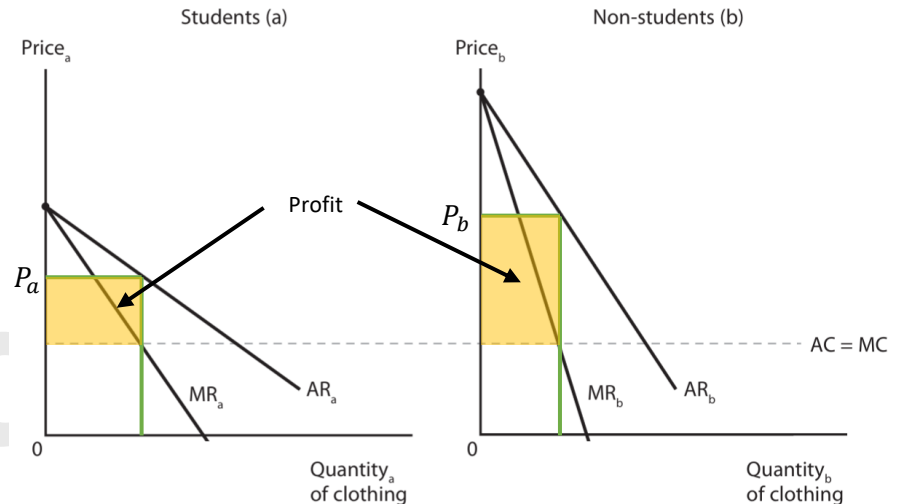
- ☐ A It has some degree of market power
- ☐ B It is able to store its product
- ☐ C Its product has different features in different markets
- ☐ D The costs of supplying some customers are higher

Monopoly

Exam Style Question 19

Answer:

- (a) Complete the third-degree price discrimination diagram below. [4]



- (b) Which **one** of the following is necessary for a firm to be able to practise price discrimination?

☒ Correct answer: A – It has some degree of market power [1]

☒ Why not the others?

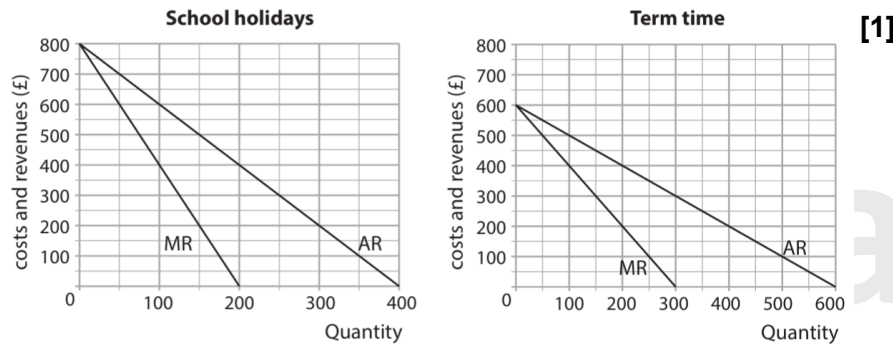
- B – Nice to have but not needed for price discrimination.
- C – That's **product differentiation**, not price discrimination.
- D – That's **cost-based pricing**, not price discrimination.

Monopoly

Exam Style Question 20

A monopolist supplier of holidays to a small island resort splits the market into two sub-markets: one for school holidays and the other for term time. The diagrams show the average revenue (AR) and the marginal revenue (MR) curves for holidays in the two sub-markets.

If the marginal cost of providing one holiday is £200 at any time of the year, what prices should the holiday firm charge in the two sub-markets to maximise profits?



[1]

	Price in school holidays, £	Price in term time, £
A	200	200
B	300	300
C	400	300
D	400	500
E	500	400

Answer

Explanation [3]

Monopoly

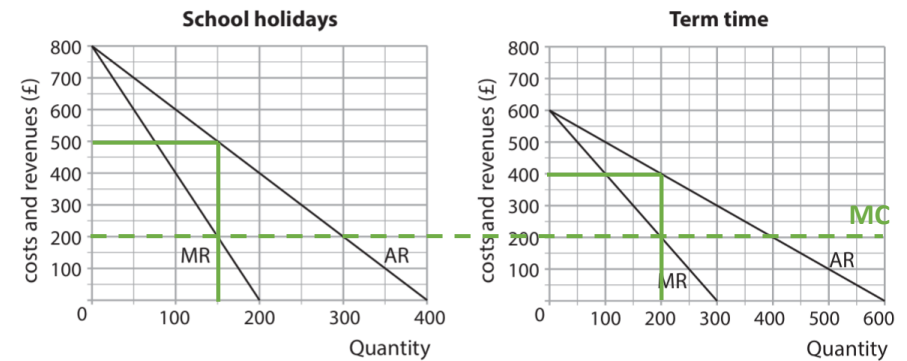
Exam Style Question 20

Answer:

✓ Correct answer: E – £500 in school holiday, £400 in term time [1]

Explanation

Price discrimination, which is when a firm charges different prices to different groups of consumers based on their elasticity of demand. [1]



- In **School Holidays**, the **MR = MC (£200)** point hits MR at a lower quantity. If you trace up from that point to the **AR curve**, the price is **£500**. [1]
- In **Term Time**, MR = MC at a slightly higher quantity, and tracing up to the AR curve gives you a price of **£400**. [1]

So:

- **Price in school holidays = £500**
- **Price in term time = £400**

👉 That's option E.

Monopoly

Exam Style Question 21

In December 2013, Virgin Trains quoted the following prices for a single train journey on 27 December at 07.55 hours between London and Manchester:

Passenger/ticket type	Price
Advance	£67.00
Senior citizen advance	£44.20

[1]

The most likely explanation of this pricing strategy is

- A To increase revenue
- B To take advantage of the lower price elasticity of demand for rail tickets of senior citizens
- C That it is easy for tickets to be bought by a senior citizen and used by any passenger
- D That the cost of providing seats for advance passengers is higher
- E To attract the attention of the competition authorities

Answer

☐

Explanation [3]



Monopoly

Exam Style Question 21

Answer:

✓ Correct answer: A – To increase revenue [1]

Explanation

This question is a classic case of **price discrimination**, which is when a firm charges **different prices to different groups of consumers** for **essentially the same product**, in this case, a train ticket from London to Manchester. [1]

Price discrimination helps a firm **maximise revenue** by charging consumers **what they're willing to pay**.

Revenue refers to the money that is coming into the firm. [1]

Virgin Trains is charging **£67** for an advance ticket and **£44.20** for senior citizens.

Senior citizens tend to have **more elastic demand** (they're more price-sensitive; they might travel at off-peak times or not travel at all if it's too expensive). [1]

Charging them less means **they're more likely to buy the ticket**, which means **more total revenue** for Virgin Trains than if they priced all tickets the same.

Monopoly

Exam Style Question 22

A bowl of freshly cooked noodles in a Thai market costs 30 baht before 6pm and 60 baht after 6pm every day. What economic reasoning best explains this price change?

[1]

- A The demand for noodles is more price inelastic after 6pm
- B The cost of making noodles falls after 6pm
- C Before 6pm the firms have a high degree of market power
- D Firms supplying noodles in this market are aiming for allocative efficiency
- E Noodles bought before 6pm can be resold in the same market after 6pm

Answer

☐

Explanation [3]



Monopoly

Exam Style Question 22

Answer:



Correct answer: A – The demand for noodles is more price inelastic after 6pm [1]

Explanation

This question is a classic case of **price discrimination**, which is when a firm charges **different prices** to **different groups of consumers** for **essentially the same product**. [1]

Price inelastic demand means that even when the price goes up, people still buy the product because they **need** or **really want** it and don't have many alternatives. [1]

Before 6pm, the price is **30 baht**. After 6pm, it **doubles to 60 baht** yet people still buy the noodles. That suggests they're less sensitive to price at that time, probably because:

- They're hungry after work,
- Fewer food stalls are open, and
- Convenience wins over price.

This all adds up to **inelastic demand** (when demand barely changes despite a higher price). [1]

Monopoly

Exam Style Question 23

In August 2009 the Competition Commission published a Groceries Supply Code of Practice. Large supermarket chains were paying very low prices to some suppliers. Which type of market power does this suggest the large supermarket chains have?

- A Monopsony
- B Monopolistic competitive
- C Perfectly competitive
- D Natural monopoly
- E Competitive monopoly

[1]

Answer

☐

Explanation [3]



Monopoly

Exam Style Question 23

Answer:

✓ Correct answer: A – Monopsony [1]

Explanation

Monopsony means one dominant buyer (like a supermarket) with the power to influence the price it pays to sellers. [1]

These firms **push down prices**, which **harms suppliers** especially small farms or producers who may **struggle to survive**. [1]

The **Competition Commission** gets involved when there are concerns about **unfair practices**, like exploiting suppliers. [1]

Please see the '4. Market structures Revision Notes' pack for detailed notes.

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