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Examiners' Report/
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2013

GCE Travel and Tourism (6988)
Unit 2: The Travel and Tourism Customer

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General Comments

This report comments on the marking from this June moderation series. This report will comment on the assessment evidence requirements, the accuracy of the marking and the administration. There are also some general comments and details of support materials available from Edexcel.

1. Assessment Evidence

The tasks for the unit are set within the specification. There are four tasks for the unit shown on page 21 of the specification. Three of the tasks should be completed following investigation of various travel and tourism organisations. The fourth task (b) can be completed independently through dealing with customers through work experience or role plays.
The Tasks are:

a) A description of the needs of customers in one entire sector of the Industry and an explanation of how the organisations, in that sector meets those needs.
b) Customers have been dealt with in four real or simulated travel and tourism situations. A complaint is dealt with.
c) A method is proposed for evaluating customer service and documentation is produced.
d) An evaluation of customer service in a travel and tourism organisation covering quality criteria, with conclusions and recommendations.

Included in many portfolios were the tasks set by the centre, indicating that students had been given correct information about the evidence requirements.

The Travel and Tourism Organisations

Most candidates selected travel and tourism organisations to investigate. The most popular type of organisation is still accommodation mainly the Hotel component being covered and airlines and Travel Agency. For many centres all students in the cohort selected to investigate the same organisation. In a minority of centres, students chose to study different organisations. Either approach was acceptable.

Teachers are advised to confirm with students, their choice of organisation and sector to ensure they have selected one that is appropriate. Teachers may also want to liaise with the selected organisation to ensure they are able to provide access to relevant information, some of which may not be available for general public scrutiny.

Some centres are still focusing on **one or two organisations**; this does not constitute a sector.

Many centres were able to use their own facilities for task b).However these must be Travel and Tourism based, Catering is not acceptable, however centres are permitted to use a Hotel scenario for one of their role plays. Welcome Meeting scenarios although acceptable MUST highlight and demonstrate how and where the students have met different customer needs.

Students may complete task c and d for this unit on different organisations. However this may limit them being able to progress up the grade boundary. Centres should note that tasks C and D should be completed and presented as discrete tasks.

Task A

This task addresses AO1 – demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the specified content and of related skills in vocationally related contexts.

This task was divided into two elements. The first element consists of students showing knowledge by describing the needs of customers within an **entire** sector of the Industry. The second element requires students to demonstrate an understanding by explaining how organisations within this sector meet those customer needs.

There was no significant improvement on this task this series. There was some good practice demonstrated by some students in that they selected the Accommodation sector and covered in depth a variety of organisations within that sector. In some cases there was a greater focus on different types of customers and their needs for the first part of this task.

In some centres, students are still not demonstrating an understanding of **customer needs;** in some instances many were descriptive, giving what was provided by the organisation, rather than how the organisation met the needs of customers. Some students are still not showing an understanding of “needs”, they consistently refer to what would be “nice” for a family or what groups might “want”, or what a customer expects, rather than how their needs were met and why. Students need to show here that they understand what a need is for example something which is “essential” and not optional , is it is not ”good” it is necessary.

For the **Second** part of the task, students need to demonstrate an understanding by explaining how organisations within their chosen sector meet those customer needs. Overall some students are still not looking at a whole sector and are still focusing on two or three organisations from within their chosen sector. In some cases students are just focusing on one or two organisations from their sector, for example where the student has selected the Hotel sector, they have tended to focus on “ONE” hotel and not spread their examples through a selection of different hotels, campsites, B&B etc.

One or two examples are not acceptable and this does not meet any mark bands higher than mark band 1 or low mark band 2. Students must look at a range of organisations that will cover and meet the need of all their different customer types and needs. At times students gave a description of products and services that the organisation provided which were not explained and often read like a brochure on the organisation.
In most cases an attempt at an explanation was given on how the organisations in that sector provided different products and services for different customers but at times students did not focus on how they met different customer needs. One centre had solely focused on one organisation. This does not cover a sector and would result in MB1 or low MB2 being awarded for the work.

Some students used a template/grid system to help them with the task. However, if they use this format they must describe in detail, within the grids, how the organisations meet the different needs of different customers and not just write brief points. This format though does help ensure they have considered all the different types of customers within their sector and their needs. They must ensure they are describing and not listing points.

More students did address the first part of this task this series and did attempt to describe the needs. However, at times some students still tended to describe what products and services the different customers wanted and not what their different needs were. Assessors should break this task into two clear tasks - one to focus on the needs of the different customers within the sector and one on how organisations within the sector meet the needs.

The Key requirement is for students to show knowledge and understanding through accurately identifying and describing the **needs** of customers in one sector of the Travel and Tourism Industry and being able to **explain** how organisations belonging to that sector meet those needs. Assessors and students should ensure that both parts of these tasks are completed.

Task B
This task addresses AO2 – apply the knowledge, skills and understanding specified in the subject content.

Students are required to deal with **FOUR** different types of customers and situations. One of these must be a Complaint, which may be in the form of a letter.
Most of the centres seen used simulations to address this task which is perfectly fine, however centres should note they must be from the Travel and Tourism Sector and Catering and Leisure are not acceptable. However one role play may be carried out in a Hospitality situation. Some Centres were also found to be using parents / open evenings; these are not acceptable for this task.

There was once again evidence this series of students taking part in Welcome Meetings. Although this scenario is acceptable the evidence must show how the student has interacted with the customers and met their different needs. In most cases, all the evidence submitted only demonstrated students giving an overview of a resort or destination to a group of customers. If students are involved with dealing with different customers after their presentation, then different scenarios must be included for this with detailed witness statements showing how and where they achieved the criteria. Welcome Meeting scenarios although acceptable MUST highlight and demonstrate how and where the students have met different customer needs. Centres should note that a power point presentation of a destination on its own does not demonstrate how students have met the different needs of different customers listed in the specification. At times there was clear evidence of students meeting needs of customers, however supplementary needs were unclear.

All students showed evidence of their dealings with customers in mainly simulated situations. In some cases it was unclear what types of customer had been dealt with, as some assessors gave a clear and detailed scenario but just stated “a customer” as a type. Centres must give a clear description of the type of customer being dealt with. All of the scenarios were in travel and tourism contexts.

If students intend to demonstrate customer service through work experience, the centre should ensure this experience is within a travel and tourism organisation as appropriate to the components in unit 1. Assessors should also note that it is the Centre Assessor who must witness the student dealing with the different types of customers and situations and not the staff within the work experience organisation. A work experience report is not sufficient evidence for this task.

The assessor must witness all the activity in the work placement and fill in the relevant documentation. In some cases this series work placement had been used - although it is good practice to get students out into industry; work experience in a hotel/restaurant establishment is not enough to achieve this task as it is catering and students must mainly deal with travel and tourism organisations.

For this task, students should deal with a range of situations and a range of customers. For a significant number of students, evidence did not always show the nature of the situation or type of customer. The needs and circumstances of the customer should be given to them in detail, and in order for them to access the higher mark bands it is advisable for the assessor to include complex situations. An example of a complex situation can be found on page 28 of the specification in the Assessment Guidance for Mark Band 3.

Most of the situations ranged from straightforward to complex, however using a Telephone or responding to an email is not a Face to Face process in communicating with customers and therefore may limit students achieving the higher mark bands. To achieve the higher mark bands at least 3 scenarios must be face to face situations.

There was an improvement in the documentation completed by the students during their role plays this series. For example, if the student is given a situation of booking a holiday, there should be an Enquiry Sheet filled in followed by a Booking Form and maybe a Receipt book. This series these types of documentation were evident and were completed in detail by the student.

Centres should note it is expected that for each situation dealt with, there is a witness testimony, observation statement or assessment checklist, highlighting how the students have performed. Whichever format is used, it should include an outline of the scenario presented to the student (if simulated) or the context of the situation (if real). The type of customer should be identified. Students' performance should be described. The description should be sufficient for a non-observer to be able to support any assessment decisions made. It should make reference to key requirements of the task. There should be a summary assessment statement for each situation. Each testimony/statement/checklist should be signed and dated by an assessor. Any supporting evidence such as completed membership application forms, booking forms, receipts etc should also be submitted. This further authenticates the student's performance.

Some students are still submitting scripts of their role-plays of how they performed. Assessors should note that this is not required for this task as this does not show application and suggests that the student may not have been involved in dealing directly with customers.

Some students are still including evaluations of their performance within their portfolios. Assessors should note that this is **not** required as supporting evidence for this task.

The key requirement is for students to apply their knowledge and understanding of the key needs of customers and that appropriate communication skills have been demonstrated and that a customer focused approach has been demonstrated.

When a letter was used as evidence for a student dealing with a complaint, the evidence tended to be poor and not up to Industry standards, due to poor spelling and grammar, lack of company logo, address and date.

Students sometimes tended to offer customers unrealistic compensation; for example free “food and drink”, “70% off”, “or “free weekend for you and your whole party”. Also some students tended to make statements “I can’t believe my staff did that” or “we are having our staff retrained”. This would not be industry standard language. There was a lot of reference to food poisoning this year as a complaint, which is acceptable, however statements such as "we had the Health Inspectors in, they said we were ok so it's not us" and “the chef has been told to clean up the kitchen" are not acceptable answers to this complaint.

Centres may wish to help the students with this task by getting them to interview hotel managers on what sort of compensation they offer for different situations. This may help students offer more realistic compensation in their letters. Centres could then add a note to the work that these answers came from industry if that was the case.

Centres should note that the witness statements produced by the assessor for this session’s moderation were more detailed than last series. However, at times there was not enough written evidence by the assessor to sufficiently reflect the requirements of the various mark bands.

Although overall there was some improvement within this task by centres, assessors should note that the comments they write concerning the students’ performance are paramount to the moderation process. For example if an assessor states that the student was "nervous" this would warrant an MB1 or low MB2 grade. Centres must be careful on the phrases they use when feeding back to students.

Task C
This task addresses AO3 – use appropriate research techniques to obtain information to analyse vocationally-related issues and problems. This task is divided into two parts.

Students are to propose a method for evaluating customer service, design appropriate documentation which will aid and capture data and ensure that appropriate quality criteria have been used.
The second part of this task requires students to give an explanation of why the chosen methodology is appropriate for their organisation.

There was improvement this year with some students showing improved research techniques in terms of the documentation produced. Some students produced detailed documentation for their methodology, which included specific quality criteria and a system to assess the performance of the organisation. Students generally chose a system using excellent, good and poor, or a point system (1-10). Some centres did not include any assessment method in their documentation, which limits the transfer of data to a spread sheet. This design resulted in a tick sheet. There was some evidence of just "Yes" and "No" responses and this would limit the transfer of data to a spreadsheet and would result in MB1.

The majority of students chose at least two different methods of research and designed appropriate documentation to use. Students stated the quality criteria that they were going to use. In most cases there was no evidence of specific aspects of quality criteria being used which is a requirement for the higher mark bands. However, most of the students did choose an appropriate method for evaluating customer service and designed appropriate documentation for the selected method.

In the majority of cases the students chose either a survey, an interview or a mystery shopper exercise, or in some case two of these. Some quality criteria were mentioned and described. In some instances, the students referred to the different choice of questions for their documentation instead of the different quality criteria they had chosen to investigate. Centres should note this task is about selecting different quality criteria to research customer service not selecting questions.

Centres should be aware that for the higher mark bands, students must not only give quality criteria but specific aspects of quality criteria should also be included. The documentation must be designed to support analysis of data that is easily transferred to a spreadsheet or database.

In some instances students described in detail quality criteria to be used and then different quality criteria was used in the documentation. These two parts of the task must be linked.

An explanation is attempted of why the methodology type is appropriate for the research being undertaken, but not always on how it is appropriate for the chosen organisation. Students still tend to list mainly advantages and disadvantages of the different methods and not give an explanation of why their chosen methodology was suitable for the organisation. Many were found to be commenting on how the methodology type suited the student and not the related organisation.

The key requirement is for candidates to show **analysis** of the use of different research methodologies and their appropriateness for their organisations. Students should ensure that both parts of the task are completed and that the focus of their evidence is analysis.

In some cases the document was not included in the task or was found in Task D. The whole focus of this task is the design of the research method and therefore it must be included in the work.

Task D

This task addresses AO4 – plan and carry out investigations and tasks in which they examine vocationally related issues and problems; gather, record and analyse relevant information, evaluate evidence, make reasoned judgements and present conclusions.

Students are required to research ONE organisation, and carry out an evaluation of customer service covering a range of quality criteria with a link to bench mark standards. Conclusions should be drawn and recommendations made.

In this series of moderation, there was some improvement for some centres in terms of the evaluations produced by the students, but on the whole, evaluations still tend to be basic and more descriptive and subjective than evaluative. Students did base their evaluations of their organisation on their results.

In some centres students tended to not carry out an evaluation of their organisation, but instead they just described their interpretation of their graphs. Centres should note this is not evaluation and the students' results and graphs should only be used to substantiate their conclusions, recommendations and findings.

In this series there was still good practice shown by some centres in the use of "Trip adviser" to support and substantiate and benchmark their own findings. However, in some cases students did not link their results to benchmark standards.

Conclusions made at times tended to be straightforward with some recommendations for improvement, but at times these could be more product focused and not customer service focused. Therefore in some cases MB1 was Best Fit.

To fully achieve MB2 assessors should note that there must be some depth to the evaluations, with reasoning in their judgements and conclusions made. These should be substantiated either through data supplied by the organisation or through surveys of customers, staff etc. It was found that students did not understand the concept of substantiation and therefore conclusions were often limited. In the majority of cases the research was only based on the students' own experience and not on evidence gathered through surveys of staff and customers, or through data from their organisation.

In the majority of the work sampled, the results were based on the students' own opinion and at times results could be limited as students tended to ask closed questions where a yes or no answer was all that was needed, therefore limiting their evidence.

Recommendations should be customer service focused and not product focused and the evaluation should be objective and not subjective as was found in the majority of cases.

To conclude, the key requirement is for students to assess, and they should ensure that all parts of the task are addressed and that the focus is on evaluation and their evidence should show them making an assessment or judgement. It was clearly evident that some of the students had carried out a vast amount of research. Unfortunately instead of taking this statistical information and using it throughout their evaluations, they tended to just describe the contents of their various diagrams and pie charts, and NOT carry out an evaluation. This does not address the task.

Additional Evidence

Students do not need to show coverage of the 'what you need to learn' section, but to use these as guidance in answering the questions posed in the tasks.

2. Marking

On this moderation sample, marking at times was not accurate. There was a tendency to be generous, especially when awarding the higher mark bands. Assessors are reminded to focus on the descriptors given in the assessment grid when making judgements on students' performance. The starting point should be to determine the 'best fit' Mark Band. Assessors are advised to use the full range of marks available within the Mark Band. To facilitate this, assessors are advised to start at the mid point in the range of marks available within a Mark Band and move up or down based on the strengths or weaknesses of students' work. Assessors' comments justifying their choice of mark band and mark awarded would have assisted the moderation process.

Moderators do find it useful where assessors annotate candidate work. Annotation should focus on the Mark Band descriptors. For example, in task a) annotation could highlight clearly which sector has been selected, the different types of customers, the range of customers and the needs accurately produced by the student. In task b) annotation could show where the student has dealt with the different customers, where they have met a need and where they have met a complex need. In task c) annotation could highlight where there is evidence of analysis. If these were against the relevant statements, the moderator need only look at these aspects to be able to draw a conclusion regarding the accuracy of the marking. For task d) the assessor could highlight each reasoned conclusion and where the conclusions were substantiated it is also essential for moderators to see the pen portraits used in tasks b).

Centres are encouraged to annotate throughout the students' work and should note that ticks are not annotation. Page numbering of candidates work cross referenced to the tasks would be beneficial to the moderation process.

3. Administration

The deadline for submission of portfolios for moderation was met by the majority of centres. Assessors should ensure that where additional support has been provided to a student, or where a student has made overuse of printed material from internet sites or large sections from text books, these are not credited. A statement to that effect for the moderator would assist the process.

The correct sample was not always sent as centres tended to not include the work of the highest and lowest student if they did not have an asterix by them.

Authenticity sheets were not always included with the work in order to confirm it was the students' own work.

Centres are encouraged to NOT put student work in plastic pockets as this slows down the moderation process.

Mark record sheets were included. Centres should also ensure that the students' name and number are also on other parts of the assignment as well as the mark record sheet.

Assessor feedback sheets at times lacked detail and did not always relate to the mark band statements.

4. General Comments

Types of Evidence

Only evidence used to determine the mark awarded need be submitted in a portfolio. That evidence should be for tasks a), b), c) and d). Class notes and activities should not be sent in their portfolios.

This unit allows the opportunity for oral communication in dealing with four types of customers. If this format is used, students' portfolios should include witness testimonies, assessment checklists or observation statements. This should describe students' performance, and highlight how this leads to the mark awarded. It should be signed and dated by an assessor. Any supporting evidence such as visual aids, notes, documentation etc should also be included. Video evidence, audio tapes and computer discs and CDs are not required as forms of evidence. Where centres and/or students have used these forms of technology, a witness testimony, assessment checklist and/or observation record is required (see above) and it is this that should be sent to the moderator. Printed versions of documents can be sent in support.

General Performance

Overall, students showed some knowledge of their chosen sector and the different types of customers. However, needs were mainly lists and not exemplified. In task B some students were able to handle a complex situation with a specified customer; however documentation was at times weak. Types of customers were not always clear and in some cases role plays were not face to face.

Students were able to collect research on different methods of methodology for task C and select at least one method and design their own documentation for collecting data. Specific aspects of quality criteria were not always included in the work. The majority of students chose more than one method of research. Task D responses showed a lack of analysis and conclusions and recommendations were mainly straight forward and not matched to benchmark standards. Evaluations tended to be subjective.

Overall there was a slight improvement in this moderation series, especially with Task B and Task C.

Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

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