General Certificate of Education

Travel and Tourism
8651/8653/8656/8657/8659

TT09 **People and Quality**

Report on the Examination

2010 examination - January series

General Comments

This was the seventh operational paper of Unit 9 Travel and Tourism – People and Quality.

Candidates had clearly studied a range of travel and tourism organisations and had relevant documents in their preparatory folders. The more successful candidates managed to make use of the information they had collected, whereas the less successful candidates tended to just lift and copy, producing pages and pages of text, sometimes with little relevance to the question asked.

What was particularly good

1. The majority of candidates wrote good answers to question 4(a) about compensation culture. It was the first time that this concept was examined in a TT09 paper, and the examiners were pleased to see that all candidates understood it, with many scoring 3-4 marks and several writing very good answers (scoring 8 out of 8).

2. Most candidates started their answers with a very brief introduction which helped locate and present their chosen organisation. Although this is not compulsory, it is useful as examiners may not necessarily know if the named organisation is a local tourist attraction, a museum or a hotel.

3. Many candidates now pay closer attention to the command words; teachers must have spent time clarifying the meanings of terms such as 'outline', 'justify' and 'evaluate'. This was a problem in previous years, but now fewer candidates ignore the command words and the subsequent expectations. When asked to evaluate, even the less successful candidates do endeavour to evaluate, for example in questions 1(b) and 2(b), thereby showing some ability to meet Assessment Objective 4.

What was not so good

1. As noted in several previous reports (for example January 2008 and January 2009), too many candidates still present their answers as pages and pages of text without any break, any paragraph or any indication of structure. Candidates should really be encouraged to organise their text in sections and sub-sections, thereby showing the logic and the plan of their answer.

2. Many answers tended to be too generic and theoretical, lacking contextualisation. Candidates should be reminded that they need to write about a specific organisation, and there needs to be a sense of that organisation in the answer. This was particularly noticeable for question 2(b).

3. Some candidates did not understand the concept of 'positive physical working environment' (question 3(c)).

ASSIGNMENT TASK 1

This task was about customer feedback. For 1(a), most candidates were able to score two marks for a basic description of a technique used in their chosen organisation (e.g. questionnaire or mystery shopper), but for higher marks more precise details in the context of the organisation were necessary (e.g. number and size of questionnaire, return rate, frequency of visit of mystery shoppers etc). A couple of candidates wrote that their chosen organisation does not collect customer feedback. Clearly they should have chosen another organisation for Task 1, as they were not therefore able to write much for 1(b) and 1(c) either. For 1(b), candidates were asked to evaluate the suitability of the technique described in 1(a). Most candidates produced balanced answers, though all too often they remained too generic and theoretical, as if copied directly out of a book about research methodology. Few candidates commented on the suitability of the method for their chosen travel and tourism organisation, and instead commented on the method for any business. That same weakness was quite common for 1(c), with many candidates explaining how customer feedback can be used in general, and not referring to changes to customer service practices in their chosen organisation, despite being explicitly asked to do so.

ASSIGNMENT TASK 2

This task was about security of information. For 2(a), most candidates scored 3 or 4 marks as they duly described systems and procedures in place in their chosen organisation. However, very few answers reached Level 2 (5 to 8 marks) as most candidates did not refer to the Data Protection Act, although this was explicit in the question. Candidates were asked to explain the systems and procedures in place to ensure the organisation complies with the Act, yet few mentioned the Act, except for a few words of introduction. For 2(b), candidates were then asked to evaluate the risks of the theft and misuse of electronic information. Some answers were clearly evaluative (about low risks or high risks, with some justifications), but too many merely described situations of theft of information (e.g. hackers), or systems in place to prevent misuse of information (e.g. password protected computers). Candidates should focus more on the questions asked – not just on the command terms (in this case 'evaluate') but on the entire questions (what needs to be evaluated? not the systems in place, but the risks).

ASSIGNMENT TASK 3

This task was about health and safety and the working environment. Many candidates scored 4 marks for 3(a), duly outlining two health and safety risks for employees of their chosen organisations (2 marks for each risk). Some very good answers were detailed and developed in context, scoring the maximum mark of 6. Question 3(b) was comparable to 2(a), as for both questions candidates were asked to link the systems and procedures in place to a particular piece of legislation (the Data Protection Act for 2a, the Health and Safety at Work Act for 3(b)). As was the case for 2(a), candidates had no difficulty describing systems and procedures, but many failed to refer back to the Act, which meant that they could not score higher than level 1. The final question of Task 3 was about the concept of positive physical working environment. Some candidates answered very well (several were awarded the maximum of 6 marks), but too many did not understand the concept at all. Instead they wrote about financial incentives, motivation theory or management style. In such cases, it was not possible to award any mark for 3(c).

ASSIGNMENT TASK 4

This task was about trends and changes, especially with reference to compensation culture and to new regulations and legislation affecting the travel and tourism industry. Most candidates wrote good answers about compensation culture for 4(a). They clearly understood the concept, even though they did not always link it back to operations in travel and tourism organisations. For 4(b), candidates were asked to discuss the impacts of changing regulations and legislation. Many only summarised one law (usually the Disability Discrimination Act) or a series of laws (usually the ones mentioned in the Specification), writing a series of short commentaries rather than a discussion. Candidates who referred to more recent legislation precisely affecting travel and tourism organisations (such as licensing laws and the smoking ban for restaurants, or security measures for airports) tended to score higher as their answers were duly contextualised, as one expects for TT09.

Suggestions for teachers to prepare future TT09 candidates

1. Ensure that candidates understand all concepts from the Specification. 'Positive physical working environment' proved unknown for too many candidates, just as 'benchmarking' did a few years ago.

2. Stress the visual importance of the layout and presentation of the answers. The exam script ultimately remains a tool of written communication.

3. Make sure that candidates understand the documents they have in their preparatory folders. It is important that they know how to use the preparatory folders for their answers, as opposed to just lifting and copying pages. After the TT09 exam, several centres were asked to send their preparatory folders to AQA. Senior examiners have carefully looked at them and noted a recurrent feature: the unnecessary amount of information was undoubtedly a distraction for many candidates. Many candidates had too much material (e.g. pages and pages printed from the Internet) and were not always able to navigate through their portfolio and demonstrate their understanding of the documents and of TT09 as a whole. In many cases, instead of answering the question asked, they just copied their draft answers to cognate questions from previous TT09 exam papers. Using previous exam papers is an excellent revision technique, but candidates must realise that the questions will differ from one session to the next.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the **Results Statistics** page of the AQA Website.