



**General Certificate of Education (A-level) Applied
January 2011**

Travel and Tourism

TT09

**(Specification
8651/8653/8656/8657/8659)**

Unit 9: Travel and Tourism - People and Quality

Report on the Examination

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GENERIC COMMENTS

This was the ninth 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 better candidates managed to make use of the information they had collected, answering the questions with focus and cogency, whereas the weaker candidates often tended to just lift and copy, producing pages and pages of text, sometimes with little direct relevance to the question asked.

What was particularly good

1. Many candidates wrote good answers to question **11** (worth 12 marks) about problems caused by factors such as technical failures or weather conditions. Many referred to recent events from 2010, such as the Icelandic ash cloud or the travel chaos resulting from the snow in December, the BA strikes or the civil unrest in Thailand and subsequent trouble. It was very good to see candidates have an appreciation of recent events that severely affected the travel and tourism industry.
2. Most candidates showed good knowledge of key concepts from the Specification, from job rotation and target setting (question **07**) to compensation culture (question **10**).
3. Most candidates paid close attention to the command words; it appears that teachers 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 resulting expectations. Even the weaker candidates, when asked to evaluate, do endeavour to do so (question **04**, question **09**), thereby showing some ability to meet Assessment Objective 4.

What was not so good

1. As noted in previous reports (including January 2008, January 2009, January 2010), 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 be encouraged to organise their text in sections and sub-sections, thereby showing the plan and logic of their answer.
2. Many candidates displayed a tendency to write about everything remotely relevant to the topic, for example for question **05** covering all pieces of legislation they had studied. In many cases, answers that are several pages long are unlikely to be sufficiently focused. Concise answers can score higher marks than very long ones!

ASSIGNMENT TASK A

This task was about customer service standards. This is an area of the Specification that candidates usually cover and prepare very well. Most are ready for questions about customer feedback, so Assignment Task A did not present any particular difficulty.

For question **01**, candidates were asked to describe one technique used by their chosen organisation to collect customer feedback. Higher marks were awarded to candidates who provided detailed description in the context of their organisation, as opposed to generic definitions or even a theoretical presentation of the advantages and disadvantages of, say, a mystery shopper or an exit questionnaire.

The aim of question **02** was to assess if candidates understood why organisations collect customer feedback: it is not an end in itself, but a means to identify areas for improvement or to create statistical data for monitoring or benchmarking purposes. The majority of candidates answered that question correctly.

For question **03**, candidates had to outline two criteria used by their chosen organisation to measure the quality of its customer service. Many candidates answered correctly (writing either about some of the criteria from the Specification, e.g. value for money, or about organisation-specific criteria, such as queuing time at airport security) – however many candidates misunderstood the term “criteria” and wrote about surveys or customer feedback. Some candidates wrote very long answers about benchmarking; it is true that benchmarking can be used to measure the quality of customer service, but benchmarking in itself is not a criterion: it uses a range of criteria – and this is what candidates should have examined. It can also be noted here that many candidates did not realise that the singular form is “a criterion”.

For question **04**, candidates had to evaluate how well their chosen organisation meets the needs of two types of customer. A large majority of candidates tackled the question properly, though some wrote about three types of customer, and some others about just one type. In the last case, it is not clear whether candidates just ignored the instructions, or whether they were not able to identify more than one type of customer targeted by their chosen organisation.

ASSIGNMENT TASK B

This task was about health and safety and the law. Candidates clearly had a lot of information in their preparatory folders, though they did not always use it optimally, especially when selecting relevant topics and sections.

Question **05** invited candidates to explain how changing regulations may have had an impact on customer service in their chosen organisation. Many candidates wrote good answers, typically referring to the DDA (which seems to be a favourite of TT09 classes over the country) and its impacts. Some candidates based their answers on recent changing regulations, including the smoking ban in public places as well as security measures in an airport; the explanations were easy to link to customer service, customer expectations and customer satisfaction. A small group of candidates wrote about the increase in VAT to 20% and its likely impacts – it was very good to see candidates show their knowledge of recent economic changes in the UK. Many candidates however did not consider carefully what they were expected to do; they just wrote about each piece of legislation they had studied, often in chronological order (1974 Health and Safety at Work Act, 1975 Sex Discrimination Act etc). The pivotal point of question **05** was the notion of “changing regulations having an impact” but many candidates failed to consider this.

Question **06** was about European Union directives on health and safety. The quality of answers proved polarised: on the one hand, some students only wrote about health and safety in general (without any reference to EU directives) and consequently scored low marks; on the other hand, some wrote very good answers analysing how EU directives on health and safety (e.g. working time directives) had affected operational practices in their chosen organisations.

ASSIGNMENT TASK C

This task was about management and motivation of teams.

Most candidates, if not all, were able to answer question **06** about job rotation and target setting. Although this style of question (asking “with reference to your chosen organisation, what is meant by...”) was new for TT09, candidates responded very well; they understood that their answer had to be applied to their chosen organisation.

Question **08** was about financial incentives. Most candidates understood the concept; their answers covered a range of relevant examples: bonuses, discounts on meals, pension schemes, performance-related pay etc. A small number of candidates wrote about all types of incentives, even non-financial ones.

Question **09** was about empowerment. Some candidates duly evaluated the extent to which one member of staff from their chosen organisation was being empowered; the answers were particularly good when candidates focused on a named member of staff, clearly focusing on that person, rather than just writing about groups of staff (such as “the receptionists” or “the sales advisers”). Many candidates however did not understand the meaning of empowerment; instead they wrote about promotion, training or about managerial roles. The choice of the member of staff was particularly important: attempting to evaluate the extent to which the top manager of a hotel is empowered is a very difficult task!

ASSIGNMENT TASK D

This task was about complaints and serious situations.

For question **10**, candidates were asked to explain how a growing compensation culture has affected travel and tourism organisations. Just like the DDA (see question **05**), the topic of compensation culture is one that many TT09 candidates seem to enjoy writing about; this might be due to the frequent presence of the theme in the media, both in the news and in television programmes. The better answers used several examples and presented compensation culture as a social trend; the weaker ones tended to focus just on the topic of complaints (it seems that some candidates had prepared answers to exam questions about complaints, and they just seized that opportunity to copy information from the preparatory folder about complaints).

For question **11**, candidates were asked to explain how and why travel and tourism organisations deal with a range of complex problems caused by factors such as technical failures or weather conditions. Although the phrase “factors such as...” invited a range of other answers, most candidates wrote only about technical failures and weather conditions; that approach was fine. It was very good to see candidates refer to recent events such as the Icelandic ash cloud, the travel chaos resulting from the snow in December, the BA strikes or the civil unrest in several countries. A2 candidates can be expected to have a sound knowledge of the business environment in which travel and tourism organisations operate; that question gave them the opportunity to link events with recent media coverage to their studies. QWC (Quality of Written Communication) was assessed as part of question **11**; this enabled some candidates to score a few more marks, however some other candidates penalised themselves because of their limited use of specialist vocabulary and noticeable errors in spelling, grammar and accepted conventions of written communication.

Suggestions for teachers to prepare future TT09 candidates

1. Ensure that candidates understand all concepts from the Specification (“empowerment” proved unclear for many candidates, just as “benchmarking” and “positive physical working environment” did in the past).
2. Stress the 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; extracting information relevant to a specific question as opposed to just lifting and copying pages and pages.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.