Examiners' Report/ Principal Examiner Feedback

January 2011

Applied GCE

GCE in Travel & Tourism Unit 8: Current Issues

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Introduction

Materials available

Reports for each exam series are available on the Edexcel website at www.edexcel.com. Support materials for assessors including a marking portfolio guide are also available.

This report will summarise the key issues this series and then comment on the assessment evidence requirements, the accuracy of the marking and the administration.

Key Issues

Task (a)

Many of the titles selected by candidates for the investigation were unclear. Furthermore, many descriptions did not clarify the issue in relation to the travel and tourism industry or one of its component sectors. In some cases the evidence was a description of the findings relating to the issue which is credited in task (c). Whilst it is the description rather than the title which is key when determining the marks to be awarded, a clear focused title does aid the process for candidates. For example, 'Do British tourists have the worst reputation?' Whilst this title has the opportunity to describe the issue, it is vague. Where issues were vague, candidates appear to have found it more difficult to plan their investigation for the project. In these instances the plans tended to be generic. If the issue is phrased more clearly and addresses an issue, cadidates may find the task more accessible and it will support access to higher marks in tasks b) and c). For this task, if the issue is clear there is more scope for the methodology to be detailed and to explain, rather than describe, how the aims will be met. Candidates will also be able to describe the issue rather than simply provide information about a topic.

Some candidates described a range of topics rather than selecting a specific issue to be the focus. Furthermore, some described a range of topics which were beyond the requirements of the assessment i.e. they described terrorism, disease, climate change etc.

A few candidates focused simply on an event. An event is not an important question which is in dispute, it is something that has happened which cannot be settled or resolved. There were a few learners, for example, whose research proposals simply linked to the Eyjafjallajoekull volcanic eruption.

The detail given in the plans varied. Most research plans generally gave some detail about the activities to be undertaken to meet the aim(s)/objectives. Many candidates attempted to provide some detail in the description of the methodology to be used however there were a few which were generic. Few candidates described in detail how the aims would be met. A few candidates were able to explain how the aims would be met and the methodology to be used, although in a few cases the evidence was a theoretical explanation rather than one which was linked to their own enquiry. For example, candidates discussed general advantages and disadvantages of different research methods rather than giving reasons for the methods selected specific to their own investigation. The explanation of how aims would be met was often an area of weakness. The timescales of activities differed in presentation. Some showed detail although this varied between candidates and centres. Timescales were usually given and were realistic. A few candidates did not set timescales which impacted on task (b). The plan should be submitted before the project is carried out.

Task (b)

In many cases, the evidence for this task was an update of what candidates did rather than evidence of using their plan(s) as a working document. Few plans showed evidence of rescheduling timescales where planned dates were not met. Few added additional tasks/activities to the plan as the investigation progressed. At mark band 2 and 3 it is expected that the candidate will update the plan, not simply state what they did.

There was limited evidence to determine how well the candidate followed their plans. There was overall limited evidence relating to contingency plans. In a few examples there was evidence of planning for a contingency which is credited in task (a) rather than documenting contingencies required. Most candidates achieved their set aim(s)/objectives, although those candidates who gave particularly focused plans with clear perimeters in task (a) tended to be the candidates that clearly achieved them.

Task (c)

For a few candidates, often those whom did not have a clear issue presented in task (a), it was difficult to ascertain the purpose of some of the research used. The research should be that as indicated in the plan in task (a). Overall most candidates used a range of sources of research including primary and secondary, however few used a range of techniques e.g. newspapers; interview; emails etc. For many candidates the methodology used did follow the plan and often additional sources were used. Only a few candidates attempted to give an explanation of the need for the additional sources. Where there was evidence of the additional sources it tended to be a description of the sources used rather than an explanation of why they needed additional sources. Many candidates referenced work although in some cases referencing was limited to websites. In some instances referencing was simply a website at the end of a paragraph.

The quality of the analysis varied between candidates. There was some good analysis which demonstrated higher order skills however the clarity of the analysis in relation to the effect of the issue on the on the travel and tourism industry or one of its component sectors varied. Those few candidates that set clear perimeters in task (a) and had a clear issue, considered the effects of the issue on the travel and tourism industry or one of its component sectors. Where lower marks were awarded the evidence tended to be basic facts and parts were descriptive. In these cases there was a tendency to describe the findings and present basic facts rather than to analyse findings. This was not the case in all centres and it was most common when candidates used an event rather than a current issue, or where an issue was unclear (ie a topic rather than an issue).

Task (d)

It was clear which centres had followed the guidance in the previous series' moderators report. Most candidates considered the process and methodology used which was encouraging. Conclusions, however, varied in quality and some were straightforward. Recommendations and limitations tended to be the main area of weakness. In some cases the limitations of the project were not considered and the recommendations were very limited in detail. To access the higher marks, candidates should offer greater depth in their evaluation and use the evidence to support objective conclusions. More candidates did try and offer some objectivity; however, few candidates substantiated their conclusions.

Assessment Evidence

The tasks for the unit are set within the specification. There are no requirements for how evidence of completing these tasks is presented, except that in task (a) candidates are required to produce a plan and in task (b) show evidence of using the plan. There are four tasks for the unit as shown on p97 of the specification. Each task targets one of the Assessment Objectives (AOs) for the qualification. These AOs are given on p155 of the specification.

Whilst candidates can carry out tasks as a group, each task **must** be individually met by each candidate. Centres should be advised that if group work is carried out then the evidence presented must clearly identify the actual evidence achieved by each individual candidate.

For task (a) it is recommended that an original plan is submitted and an updated plan (or plans) showing usage, including any of the changes made, be submitted for task (b). The evidence for task (b) should be evidence of a working document rather than a reflective account of changes. It is also recommended that the plan is regularly check and authenticated by the tutor.

The tasks are already pre-set by Edexcel.

The evidence should include:

Task (a)
A research proposal that includes a description of the issue and a plan that shows the project aims and the research methodology adopted, including timescales and planned sources of reference.

For task (a) there is no specific scenario required for this task however candidates should investigate a recent issue ie within the last five years. The candidate can select the issue to be investigated. Marks are awarded for how well the candidate describes their selected issue and how well they plan the project. A good example of this task is when candidates have a clear issue to be the focus of the project and where they are able to demonstrate in depth planning skills for their investigation.

The evidence expected for this task is a description of the issue selected for the focus of the research study. This should be an issue, which can be defined as *'an important question that is in dispute and needs to be settled'.*

The description should detail the issue rather than describe the findings, as this forms task (c). If candidates select an event then it is not an important question which is in dispute and cannot therefore be resolved. The recent volcanic ash cloud is an event, as are specific terrorist attacks. These events may be used as part of the research, but alone do not constitute issues.

For example: A candidate investigating whether exchange rates between the Euro and the pound affect tour operators' sales (or travel agents/ transport/travel and tourism industry - this would be described in the scope). The issue to be investigated is disputing whether the Euro is the factor affecting the sales. In this example it is an issue linked to a component ie tour operators. The scope could include looking at exchange rates, types of tour operators, the destinations to be considered etc. As part of the research findings in task (c), the candidate may find that the Euro does affect sales but also may find that between certain dates the sales appear to have been affected by the ash cloud (an event). Whilst the candidate would include the event in their findings, the investigation is about the issue of sales. The event only plays a part of the investigation. The research undertaken will challenge and or answer questions set as part of the aim(s) and objectives.

The other evidence expected for this task should be a plan that shows the project aims and consider the parameters of the study. There should also be consideration of the research methodology to be used. To access higher marks then candidates should consider the level of detail included in the plan. This will aid the successful completion of other tasks. Mark band 3 requires an explanation of how the project aims will be met and an explanation of the research methodology to be used. Candidates should demonstrate an awareness of the methodological tools available to them and show some understanding of which methods would be suitable for their research project. There should be consideration of both primary and secondary research to access the higher marks available for task (c) to be met ie 'use a range of techniques'.

The plan could consider the following:

- Dates for the activities to be met
- Links to aims and objectives
- Details as to how the aim(s) and objectives will be met
- Research tools/methods to be used to meet aims and objectives
- Target dates
- Contingency planning. What could go wrong? What could the learner do to sort this?

Task (b)

How the candidate worked independently and followed the research plan to meet the aims and timescales. How the candidate dealt with the changes to the plan.

For task (b) there is no specific scenario. Marks are awarded for how well the candidate followed and used the plan (ie a working document). A good example of this task is when candidates regularly update the plan, rescheduling as required and using contingency plans when problems occur. When candidates did not achieve many marks for this task it was often because they had followed their plan poorly, and simply given an account of what they did. There was often limited or no evidence of them updating their plan.

Evidence expected would show how well the candidate worked independently and how well they followed the research plan to meet the aims and timescales. Evidence could be presented as an updated plan with details of what was completed and which deadlines were met, any changes to the plan, a statement from the candidate, and a statement from the assessor.

The plan could be updated as follows:

- Revised aims and objectives – through the process the candidate may be required to make changes to the initial aim(s) and objectives set.
- Indication of whether the aims and objectives have been achieved.
- Achievement dates - dates set could be updated to indicate whether they have been achieved.
- Reviewed target dates - dates could be changed / updated to indicate a revised schedule for an activity where deadlines have not been achieved. If one date is changed it may be likely that it has an impact on the overall schedule and therefore a revised timeline may be required.
- Additional activities and target dates added - it is likely throughout the process that candidates will need to add additional activities to their plan eg they may find a link to a new resource. In these instances the plan should be modified to take account of these changes. Any additional research methods / sources required could be documented here, although this evidence is credited in task (c) (ie reasons for the additional sources).
  Please note that the explanation is only a characteristic of mark band 3 descriptions.
- Changes documented including reasons
- Updating of contingencies
- Assessor comments / authentication

Task (c)

Research undertaken, as indicated in the plan for the project. Analysis of the issue and its effect on the travel and tourism industry or one of its component sectors.

For task (c) there is no specific scenario. The candidate can select the issue to be investigated. The task relates to using different information sources and techniques and how well candidates analyse the information researched.

There should be evidence of research undertaken that links to the research proposal issue. Evidence expected for this task is a bibliography and/or referencing in the body of the text of the sources used. To achieve higher marks at least some sources would be referenced in the evidence submitted. It is not expected that the candidate would use the Harvard referencing system precisely although some similar format would be expected. At the higher mark range then the text should reflect and use the research rather than simply state the source used. There should also be evidence that the candidate has obtained sources independently. This could be a statement from the candidate or the assessor indicating how the sources were obtained to confirm the level of independence. In some candidates' work this series, this was evident.

To achieve higher marks the analysis should be clear and linked to the effect of the issue on the travel and tourism industry or one of its component sectors. The evidence should be analytical rather than a description of findings of the issue.

Task (d)
An evaluation of the project and the research methodology, with recommendations for approaches to be adopted for future projects.

For task (d) there is no specific scenario. Marks are awarded for how well the candidate evaluates the process and for the methodology used. A good example of this task is when candidates evaluate with objectivity and reasoning and provides detailed recommendations. When candidates did not achieve many marks for this task it was often due to limited coverage/detail, subjectivity and poor recommendations.

Candidates could consider the questions, such as those listed below, when evaluating the project. This may help candidates give more detail in their evidence.

- Was the issue title appropriate?
- Was the title an issue or simply a topic or event?
- Were the parameters too wide or too narrow?
- Did I meet all my aims and objectives?
- Were the aims and objectives achievable?
- Did I select the best methodology?
- Did I select the correct sample?
- Did I conduct adequate research?
- How valid and reliable was my research?
- How current was my research?
- Were my timescales realistic?
- Did my plan work?
- Did I update my plan regularly?
- Did I have appropriate contingencies in place?
- Did I work independently?
- What would I do differently if I did this research project again? (eg use different newspapers, change my methodology, choose different issue etc)
- What would I do the same if I did this research project again?
- What have I learnt from this research project?
- What did I find limiting?

To substantiate evaluations candidates can use assessor feedback relating to tasks (a), (b) and (c), the plan, extracts from findings, research e.g. viewpoints of authors relating to the choice of research methods used etc. For example, if the candidate identifies time management as an area of weakness, they could substantiate their conclusions by referring to unachieved dates within their plan, assessor feedback for task (b) relating to poor time management etc.

Marking

Marking was overall generous or marginally generous with the qualification standards although some samples were inconsistent. Where marking was generous it tended to be the higher marks awarded within the sample. Where marking was harsh this tended to be when awarding mark band 1.

Candidate evidence should be assessed against the assessment criteria in the specification. For each task there are three marks bands. Assessors should first determine the mark band statement that 'best fits' the evidence submitted. A note should be taken of command verbs and discriminators for each statement. For example, where task (d) requires an evaluation then if evidence is descriptive then mark band 1 applies. Mark band 2 could only be considered appropriate if learners show some evaluation with some reasoned conclusions. 'Best fit' would need to be considered where there are descriptions and some evaluation to determine if mark band 1 or 2 is best fit. Strengths and weaknesses in evidence can then be taken into account when awarding marks from within the mark band. Taking the example above, there are clearly weaknesses if mark band 2 is considered best fit and low marks from the mark band should be applied. If mark band 1 was considered best fit then higher marks can be awarded to credit the conclusions that are made.

Task (a)

The marking of this task was marginally generous rather than significantly generous. High marks at mark band 1 were often awarded with limited strength to move much beyond the mid point (ie there was limited or no attempt to describe how the aims would be met, or the methodology to be used; the issue described was often unclear and had limited detail; the plan lacked detail).

Some samples awarded top marks at mark band 2 had either limited detail of the issue or limited detail as to how the aims would be met and the methodology to be used. Where marking was generous at mark band 3 it was often due to a lack of clarity of the issue that the project would focus on and evidence was not felt to be comprehensive. Furthermore in some samples the explanation of the methodology to be used was descriptive and in the occasional sample the evidence gave a theoretical explanation or description of research methodologies.

Task (b)

The marking of this task was generous in some samples when higher mark bands were awarded. Frequently higher marks at mark band 2 were awarded for evidence that showed no strength/traits of the higher mark band, and featured limited updating and following of the plan. At mark band 3 the evidence in some sample was more characteristic of mark band 2. The evidence mainly related to activities undertaken rather than an updated working plan (ie the rescheduling of dates and or activities, adding of additional activities to the original plan as the investigation progresses etc).

Where contingency plans were documented they were mainly planned contingencies rather than changes to the plan based on issues that arose throughout the project.

In a few samples awarded mark band 1, marking was felt to be marginally harsh. In a few samples there was some updating and although it is acknowledged that there was some weakness in the meeting of deadlines, overall evidence was felt to be most characteristic of mark band 2. In a few instances, mark band 1 was felt to be ‘best fit’ as the updating was limited and deadlines were infrequently achieved. A higher mark within the mark band range was felt to be more appropriate, however.

Task (c)

Marking of this task was in most cases marginally generous when awarding high mark band 2 or mark band 3. Often research was evident however in some samples the use of sources within the body of the text was very limited. In some samples, which were given marks within the mark band 3 range, a range of sources were used rather than a range of research techniques. The referencing was felt not to be ‘clearly and fully’ sourced and many of the sources referenced were simply websites. When awarding mark band 3 there should be clear and comprehensive analysis of the issue and its effects on the travel and tourism industry. In some evidence the analysis lacked focus in relation to the effects on the travel and tourism industry or one of its component sectors. Candidates gave a description of additional sources used rather than an explanation of the need to access additional sources.

Task (d)

Marking of this task was often generous or marginally generous. There was a tendency to give marks at the top of the mark range yet there were no traits of the higher mark band evident. This was mainly when awarding the top of mark band 1. Some samples awarded the top of mark band 2 had some subjective conclusions. Whilst the evidence is characteristic of the mark band, awarding marks at the very top of the mark band was felt to be marginally generous. In some samples awarded mid-mark band 2 there were significant weakness in the limitation and/or recommendations to suggest a lower mark within the range to be more appropriate.

Administration

OPTEMS forms were generally completed correctly.

Samples submitted were correct. Centres submitted asterisked samples. Where candidates were withdrawn alternatives were sent. Where highest and lowest marks were not asterisked these were also usually sent.

Most centres were using the standard forms produced by the awarding body. The majority of centres completed Feedback Sheets in some detail. There was however one centre which did not complete any feedback forms.

Most centres did submit Learner Authentication Records. This is a Joint Council for General Qualifications (JCGQ) requirement. Examinations Officers have copies of generic forms that can be used but these are also available on the Edexcel website

Annotation on coursework was limited in some centres. It should be noted that this is now a JCGQ requirement. Annotation should highlight where key evidence could be found, specifically where descriptions, analysis, evaluation etc could be found. This is helpful to the moderation process.

In task (a) annotation could be used to highlight clearly where candidates show detail of the proposal and plan indicating the appropriateness of the timescales set. Annotation could highlight where candidates have given an explanation as to how the aims will be met, and where there is detail in the methodology and description of the issue.

In task (b) an individual statement could relate to how well the candidates met the deadlines and used the plan. The assessor could sign the plan at regular intervals. An indication of changes or contingency plans could be highlighted. Instances where aims have been met could be annotated as could any relevant content in the evaluation relating to meeting deadlines, aims etc.

In task (c) annotation could highlight where the learner had referenced sources and specifically where candidates had researched independently. Annotation could indicate where candidates have analysed and the level of analysis.

For task (d) the assessor could highlight where candidates had evaluated and given recommendations. When higher mark bands are awarded assessors could highlight where there is justification of the recommendations, reasoning and where there is objectivity in the evaluation.

General Comments

Edexcel does not require candidates to submit their portfolios in a file. It is sufficient for candidates to provide all work tied with a treasury tag, providing it can be easily identified. In addition to the Candidate Authentication, there should ideally be a front cover stating name of candidate, centre and candidate number. Evidence for each task would be clearly separated, ideally by a task feedback sheet.

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. Photocopies of research extracts are not necessary if a bibliography or terms of reference have been submitted.

This unit allows the opportunity for oral communication in presenting work. If this format is used, candidates' portfolios should include a witness testimony, assessment checklist or observation statement. This should describe the candidate's performance, and highlight how this justifies 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, audiotapes, computer discs and CDs are not required as forms of evidence. Where centres and/or candidates have used these forms of technology, a witness testimony, assessment checklist and/or observation record is required (see above). This should be sent to the moderator. Printed versions of documents can be sent in support.

Grade Boundaries

Grade boundaries for this, and all other papers, can be found on the website on this link:
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