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Cambridge Career Awards in Travel and Tourism - Standard

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TRAVEL AND TOURISM CORE MODULE

Paper 5251

General comments

There was another large entry for the Core Module and there was considerable variation in levels of candidate performance both within and between individual Centres. One of the major reasons for this variation was the fact that many candidates were unable to fully appreciate the wording of particular questions and therefore they were unable to respond as required. Too many individuals ignored the command verb instruction and this resulted in only limited credit being available.

Centres should make every effort to encourage their candidates to respond in an appropriate manner to the demands of particular tasks. For example, when asked to name or identify certain factors or features it is quite acceptable to list or bullet point the response. However, the invitation to explain clearly requires more than a simple listing and the concepts of discussion and evaluation mean that the candidate should address the topic or issue with some extended prose. There were far too many instances of individual candidates not attempting to do what they were asked and this certainly contributed to the reduced marks obtained by such individuals in the examination. More worryingly, some candidates were completely unable to write a structured answer and resulted in some very low marks.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

This question was set in the context of stimulus material about New York and it was pleasing to see that many candidates fully understood the main points that were illustrated. The three airports were frequently correctly identified in part **(a)(i)** but a large minority of candidates ignored the extra prompts contained on Fig. 1 for JFK, La Guardia and Newark. Similarly, in part **(a)(ii)**, a large minority simply listed methods of transfer rather than explaining how a particular inbound international visitor would have a choice, depending on which airport they arrived at. In part **(b)** the candidates were invited to give reasons for the popularity of New York as a destination and it was only the minority of answers that contained any precise illustration or exemplification of particular attractions for the leisure visitor or the business traveller. There was quite a mixed response for part **(c)**'s international departure services and many candidates chose to ignore the concept of being within the international departure section (i.e. 'air side') of an airport terminal building. However, many candidates did fully understand the differences between a cruise and a ferry service and there were many good answers to part **(d)**. There were very few good answers to part **(e)** and the concept of evaluation was lost on most candidates. Far too many answers were just a list of services provided by travel agents and there was little or no attempt to point out the comparative usefulness (either to the agency or the customer) of the products and services identified.

Question 2

The stimulus material about 'Beaches' was generally handled very well and the vast majority of candidates could identify the features of all-inclusives asked for in part **(a)** of the question. The appropriate personal qualities asked for in part **(b)(i)** were rather more hit and miss and it was only the minority of candidates that were able to talk about such matters as a professional qualification, past experience, foreign language and first aid in the 'Ultra Nannies' context. Similarly, far too many candidates tended to list job roles in part **(b)(ii)** rather than providing a description of the types of circumstance in which employees at 'Beaches' would usually come into contact with guests. There tended to be even greater confusion with parts **(c)(i)** and **(c)(ii)** and it was only the minority of answers that looked at different aspects of promotion in each of the scenarios mentioned in the question. Direct contact with the individual was wanted in part **(c)(i)** and appropriate strategies for increasing the volume of travel agency sales was expected in part **(c)(ii)**. However, it was pleasing to see so many individuals talking in an appropriate fashion about economic impacts in part **(d)**. This section was usually quite well done and there were very positive signs that most candidates had a good understanding of the topic.

Question 3

The Hong Kong stimulus material was well understood and there were many full mark answers to part **(a)**. However, very few candidates could correctly name the events/attractions asked for in parts **(b)(i)** – **(b)(iv)** and only a smaller minority could correctly indicate the visitor appeal of the example they quoted. There were very few scripts that could identify strategies appropriate to part **(c)**'s context and the reasoning that was supplied was frequently vague. This was quite similar to part **(d)** and it was common to find few clear suggestions as to why tour guides can have an effect on visitor impacts at cultural attraction sites. It was also surprising to see so few candidates having a clear understanding about part **(e)**'s sightseeing tour organisation and virtually no candidates were able to relate this topic to a known example with which they were familiar. Answers to this sub-question tended to be very brief and superficial and only very limited credit was usually obtained. The study of a local tour is well within the capabilities of most Centres and it was a shame that so few candidates were able to view the idea of effectiveness with reference to the organisation of a tour within their home environment.

Question 4

Many candidates handled the Sydney information quite well but very basic errors made when interpreting the stimulus material. Far too many candidates ignored the sunshine symbol when answering part **(a)(i)** and many individuals clearly did not fully understand the concept of a season. It was pleasing to see many correct attempts for part **(a)(iv)** and the vast majority of candidates were aware of Sydney's global position relative to GMT in answer to **(a)(v)**. The concept of a gateway was understood in **(b)(i)** but only the smallest minority could think of appropriate disadvantages as requested in part **(b)(ii)**. However, part **(c)** was generally well done with most candidates displaying a sound appreciation of the budget travel market. It was a shame that so many individuals ignored part **(d)**'s invitation to justify their comments regarding customs advice as the points that were listed from the stimulus material were very rarely commented on. Part **(e)** of this question was probably the worst answered part of the examination and the fact it was the very last question does not really explain the overall poor quality of answer produced. Far too many individuals had no conception of natural features within an urban area, let alone how they might be used for tourism purposes. There were very few appropriate factual details and the vast majority of candidates had made no attempt at a sample study of such an area. It was thus no surprise to see only limited scores for this sub-question.

MARKETING AND PROMOTION

Paper 5252

General comments

The cohort was much larger than for previous examination sessions, with a greater number of candidates from Centres having been entered. A full range of ability was encountered, but with a significant number of candidates scoring at the lower end of the mark range. Many candidates were able to demonstrate their considerable knowledge and understanding of the Syllabus and the Travel and Tourism industry in general through the responses they made, although many would have benefited from an increased awareness of the assessment focus of each question. Higher scoring candidates were able to apply their knowledge to specific case study scenarios, whereas less able candidates often wrote very generalised responses.

Several sections of the assessment objectives seemed to pose difficulty for a large number of candidates. This suggests that Centres should perhaps ensure fuller coverage of the Syllabus occurs in the teaching programmes prior to candidate entry for the examination.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

This question was based on a case study of the state of Arizona, USA. It was designed to test candidates' understanding of general marketing principles and the use of specific market research techniques.

- (a) Candidates were expected to conduct a SWOT analysis based on the case study information provided. Appropriate letters from a bank of statements had to be entered into a traditional SWOT Box. Many candidates performed this task reasonably well although few achieved all of the 8 available marks.
- (b) This question required candidates to assess the positive and negative impacts of external influences on tourism in Arizona, using the PEST model. The majority of candidates made appropriate responses to the task, although several were unable to score any marks as they duplicated information in both positive and negative fields. This made it impossible to assess their understanding of the concepts being tested.
- (c)(i) Candidates were asked to identify the main differences between primary and secondary research techniques. High ability candidates experienced no difficulty with this task, but weaker candidates made inappropriate reference to SWOT and PEST analysis here or simply stated internal and external sources, without linking these statements to either research method.
- (ii) Identification of the main disadvantage of primary research caused problems for some candidates – many just listed an example of a primary research technique here, which could not be accredited.
- (iii) Identification of the main disadvantage of secondary research caused similar problems for some candidates – many again listed an example of a secondary research technique here, which could not be accredited.
- (iv) The vast majority of candidates could provide a relevant example of a secondary data source, although the response “internal source” or “external source” alone was not credited.
- (d) This question was designed to test candidate's ability to apply their understanding of the general principles of marketing to a given case study. The majority of candidates' responses demonstrated a basic recognition of the principles of marketing but very few were able to make the necessary application to the specific case study. A simple listing of the main principles of marketing scored a Level 1 assessment – some attempt needed to have been made to explain the connection between Arizona and these general principles to score beyond this range.

Question 2

This question was designed to check candidates' understanding of market segmentation and the ways in which Travel and Tourism providers differentiate their products and services to meet different client needs.

- (a) Some candidates found it difficult to use market characteristics to correctly identify market segments, although most made a good attempt at this task.
- (b) Most candidates were able to list a good range of characteristics, which are commonly used to segment the markets within the Travel and Tourism industry. Several responses showed some confusion with the term "characteristics", and identified impacts on the industry in general here.
- (c) Parts (c) and (d) related to the Singles Market, which was defined in the initial rubric as it is not specifically targeted within the assessment objectives of the Syllabus. It appeared that very few candidates understood exactly what this specific market segment is. Some confused it with the independent traveller, whilst others made an assumption that a single traveller made a conscious decision to leave behind their partners etc. The main issues that should have been identified were those to do with safety and security, additional costs of paying single room supplements and loneliness. Many responses here were very limited and often irrelevant. Cultural differences were apparent in some answers.
- (d) Responses to the second part of the question relating to the specific needs of the singles market were generally better, although many failed to identify how tourism providers could cater for the sense of increased security these clients would appreciate.

Question 3

The focus of this series of questions was on the products and services offered by a National Art Gallery. The sub questions also targeted candidate's knowledge of the Place and Promotion aspects of the Marketing Mix.

- (a) Different types of artwork were listed as the main products of the Gallery, but could only be awarded with one mark. Candidates were expected to also identify special exhibitions and guided tours as being main products.
- (b) Some candidates were able to suggest appropriate linked services – car parking, toilets, catering etc. Weaker candidates provided less relevant examples – transport and accommodation, for example.
- (c) The definition of the differences between products and services was attempted by almost all candidates but few were able to explain the real overlaps in a travel and tourism context. The majority of candidates scored at Level 1 for this question – bullet point lists are not explanations.
- (d) Few candidates understood that the phrase "ways that products/services are made available to customers" actually refers to the distribution channel for the company. Most candidates explained how customers were made aware of the product rather than how they actually accessed it.
- (e) Promotional methods were sometimes confused here with pricing policies. Promotional pricing was accepted as one form of promotion, but the question really targeted other main forms of promotion.
- (f) The majority of candidates could correctly identify the main constraints on advertising activities.

Question 4

This question focused on the product and price aspects of the Marketing Mix.

- (a)(i) A small number of candidates appeared to not see this question.
- (ii) Weaker candidates were unable to select an appropriate example of tourism products at these life cycle stages. Many gave business examples – e.g. mobile phone networks and coco-cola rather than travel and tourism industry specific examples. This lost them valuable marks.

- (b)** There were some excellent, developed responses to the question about how the package holiday product had changed over the past 50 years from the high performing candidates. Less able candidates did not understand the question.
- (c)** Many scored well on this simple question about place as an important ingredient in the Marketing Mix. Weak candidates misunderstood the question and simply listed the four elements of the Marketing Mix.
- (d)** There was excellent knowledge and understanding of pricing strategies demonstrated by the majority of candidates here, with many scoring Level 3 responses.
- (e)** Most candidates could explain other factors which could affect the price of a holiday.

TRAVEL ORGANISATION

Paper 5253

General comments

Candidate performance over the examination was generally improved on previous sessions, with the exception of those from one or two Centres where it was apparent that candidates had been entered who were by no means sufficiently familiar with the terminology of the overall Syllabus and this unit in particular. Scripts were more legibly presented though the level of English varied between Centres. It was necessary on occasions to give 'benefit of doubt' with some responses as there was detail lacking in explanation in the response. The Centres which have entered candidates previously for this examination or have studied Principal Examiner's reports from past sessions tended to perform more appropriately and meet the requirements of the examination. There was evidence, however, of candidates not applying the detail in the stimulus at the start or during each question suitably to be able to respond appropriately to the question itself.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

- (a)(i) This was reasonably satisfactorily attempted and candidates had made use of the stimulus material to extract the relevant information.
- (ii) Most candidates were able to locate one disadvantage but only a few achieved both acceptable responses.
- (b)(i) Most candidates achieved one mark for this but few related understanding of rail travel generally to their responses to this question.
- (ii) This was poorly attempted by the majority of candidates who could not relate their learning of advantages and disadvantages of rail travel to the question.
- (c) Most candidates achieved one or two marks for this but few achieved maximum marks as they did not understand the features of scheduled airlines.
- (d) This question was not well responded to as candidates either failed to identify suitable sources of information which travellers would use, such as maps, internet webpages, guide books, brochures, and others failed to respond in terms of using these sources before departure from the UK. A Tourist Information Centre in one country would not hold information about facilities in a destination in another country and so was an invalid source. Travel agencies were not accepted unless candidates gave specific types of information provided.
- (e) Very few candidates achieved more than one or two marks for this question, as it was clear they did not understand the requirements for international travel with a car, such as international driving licence, insurance which covered international travel, safety equipment which the car must have on board, and the need to consider headlamp adjustments when having to drive on the opposite side of the road to the home country. This is an area which Centres need to develop further in their teaching programmes.
- (f) This question was not well answered generally as many candidates did not understand the requirements of the question. It was not asking candidates to respond in terms of a traveller going on holiday alone, but how a traveller could make their holiday arrangements independently as opposed to through a travel agency. Centres need to work more closely with their candidates to give help in reading the questions to extract the essential details so that responses match the requirements more closely. Very few candidates achieved maximum marks for this question, with the majority achieving no marks.

Question 2

- (a) It was clear from the responses that candidates did not fully understand the terminology of the qualification, as they could not identify the airline, tour operator or accommodation provider in far too many instances.
- (b) Again, terminology is an issue here, as candidates failed to understand the term 'half-board accommodation' in that bed and breakfast or accommodation would be worth one point, and either one main meal or breakfast and one other meal for the second point.
- (c) The information required for the completion of the booking form was in the stem of the question on page 5, information from the advertisement on page 4, along with specific details on page 7. Candidates were not always able to extract the relevant information from these to complete the form, and some gave information which did not relate to any part of the stimulus whatsoever. The form should have had the correct name and address for the correspondence (i.e. the person making the booking, J Mueller), and the other passenger details needed to include his wife as well as the two children with their correct ages. Most candidates extracted the correct hotel, date and no. of nights information, but then could not complete the section on Deposits and Insurance. Only the deposit and insurance boxes would be completed, i.e. $4 \times \$100 = \400 for the deposit and $4 \times \$50 = \200 for the insurance, making a total of \$600 paid at the time of booking. Mastercard details were generally satisfactory, but it is quite obvious that candidates need more practice on this type of form, as it is frequently used in the examination, and they need to be able to extract correct information from the stimulus material provided.
- (d) This was poorly attempted in terms of health issues such as inoculations, vaccinations, sunscreen, drinking bottled water etc. as opposed to taking out a health insurance. If 4 marks are given for this type of question, candidates need to be guided that the Examiners are probably looking for four types of prevention, rather than an extended essay response.
- (e) This does tend to be a more difficult concept for candidates to understand, but they should realise that the tour operator negotiates the best terms with the principals who provide the components of the package (airline, accommodation, transfers, attractions etc.) in order to put together a viable package that can be marketed through travel agencies and profits can be generated for all parties. Centres do need to develop candidates' responses to this type of question as similar questions occur on most Papers.

Question 3

- (a)(i) Again responses to this were not good and reflected the lack of understanding of terminology used in the Syllabus as to the differentiation between scheduled and charter airlines in terms of operating procedures. Very few candidates achieved full marks for this, as two points were expected in response.
- (ii) The idea of a stopover was satisfactory, though poorly explained by many candidates who achieved only one mark for this.
- (b) The response expected was four types of insurance which could be purchased by travellers, such as loss/theft of belongings and equipment, baggage loss or damage, medical cover, delay/cancellation etc. If four types of insurance which were appropriate were given, then full marks were awarded, but many candidates tended to give extended answers about insurance generally and not apply it to the scenario.
- (c) There have been similar questions in the past on types of currency recommended for travellers to other countries, and responses were generally very poor. It was expected that candidates would give the recommended forms of currency (e.g. travellers cheques, credit/debit cards, some cash in appropriate currency for minor expenditure) and justify why each would be used. Centres need to develop the understanding candidates have about forms of currency used by travellers and the reasons for the different forms in terms of safety, security, ease of use.
- (d) This question was the most poorly answered on the Paper and demonstrated that candidates are not able to prepare travel itineraries detailing flight arrangements, which should include the name of the airline, check-in times, departure times, correct departure and arrival destinations. Sadly, some candidates just copied the stem of the question on page 8 and therefore achieved no marks. However, there were some good examples of an itinerary being presented and these were suitably rewarded. But as this is an essential part of travel organisation, Centres need to address this issue when teaching their candidates and developing their examination techniques.

Question 4

- (a) Most candidates achieved one if not both marks for this and showed their calculations.
- (b) A customer enquiry form tends to be used in most of the examinations, and candidates do need practice in the completion of this important document within the travel agency business. The majority of candidates did achieve some marks for this, but several omitted to complete the necessary details in the 'Type of Holiday required' box. Additional notes such as Qantas flights from Sydney, Coral Princess cruise, silver wedding celebration package, were expected. Few candidates put their name in the 'Consultant's Name' box and so lost a mark. Again, practice in completion of this type of document would greatly benefit candidates.
- (c) Responses to this question were generally poor and did not highlight the fact that a taxi or limousine driver would know the fastest route and the vehicle that would be most convenient for transporting luggage. Few candidates achieved maximum marks for this question.
- (d) Knowledge of standard terminology was again lacking in response to this question, with many candidates apparently not understanding what 'baggage allowance' meant.
- (e) Many candidates were able to describe features of cruise ships quite well and most tried to relate these features to the appeal for a couple on a celebratory cruise. The majority of candidates did achieve marks within the Level 1 and 2 bands, with some extended and clear responses reaching Level 3.

VISITOR SERVICES

Paper 5254

This is an optional module in the Cambridge International Diploma in Travel and Tourism. It proved less popular this year than on previous occasions. Those Centres who have entered candidates for the module, appear to have a variable grasp of the requirements of the assessment objectives.

Fewer candidates satisfied all the pass criteria within this module during the past year, despite the consistent use of the Student Assessment Record (SAR), which enables Course Tutors to keep a track of the coverage of assessment objective evidence for individual candidates as well as monitor progress towards assignment completion. Unfortunately, a number of candidates submitted assignments which did not address all aspects of the assessment criteria.

Again, very few candidates have submitted assignment evidence to meet Distinction level criteria within this module. This is often due to the lack of depth of coverage of some of the assessment objective criteria – most notably the role and function of national, regional and local tourist boards. This aspect of the assessment often causes difficulties for Centres where such concepts are difficult to investigate at first hand.

The scale of operation is an assessment criterion which is rarely fully evidenced, and candidates showed difficulties explaining the channels of communication within any public sector tourism provision in the country or state being investigated. Candidates should be encouraged to use textbook studies to make reference to examples of how internal and external communication channels might work.

Many candidates have produced informative and detailed case study based assignments, which clearly demonstrate their knowledge of how tourism information services operate within their selected area. Some evidence of Quality Standards are mentioned but a more detailed investigation of accommodation classification schemes and how they are reviewed and implemented would again be beneficial in allowing candidates to work towards Distinction level within this assessment criteria.

The range of products and services offered by Visitor Service providers is generally well covered, with many inclusions of leaflets, pamphlets and guides. More should be explained about destination management systems in order to gain higher grading in this area.

The marketing and promotion section of the assignment criteria is usually well evidenced, particularly by those candidates who have already been entered for Module 5252. An area for improvement for future assignment work would be to encourage candidates to consider the skills of promotion employed by visitor service staff.

There has been an improvement in the evidence produced by candidates relating to the training and qualifications obtained by visitor service employees as part of the quality control section of the assignment.

Generally well evidenced are the sections on Business Travel Services and Leisure Travel Services, particularly calendar of events, festivals and exhibitions.

Professional presentation skills are employed by the majority of candidates submitting assignments for this module – spiral bound, word-processed accounts are commonly produced.

More candidates are using source-referencing techniques to help validate their research – bibliographies and contact details are often included as appendices to the assignment evidence, which are examples of excellent practice.