

Examiners' Report/ Principal Examiner Feedback

January 2011

Applied GCE

GCE Leisure Studies (6970)
Unit 5: Employment in Leisure

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General comments

The paper appeared to be accessible to candidates and there was an improvement in performance compared to last January.

Most candidates were able to respond effectively to most questions. There was evidence that most candidates had been effectively prepared, with the majority responding positively to the tasks set, offering valid answers, although many candidates did struggle to achieve the higher levels in extended responses. Almost all candidates answered all questions.

There is still a tendency for candidates to be able to cope with the demands of the paper comfortably at a basic level without managing to raise their mark beyond the level of grades C and D. These candidates have moved up in comparison to past years, but there is still a problem for a substantial number of candidates in using their knowledge and understanding to their best advantage. There has been pleasing evidence of improvement in exam technique, with less pure recall given when not required.

It is the applied nature of the GCE that is still an issue here. The purpose of this subject is to give learners an applied work related approach to the leisure industry, involving active learning and the ability to take basic principles and apply them in unfamiliar situations. A few questions will always be aimed at AO1, straightforward recall of knowledge and understanding, but the majority - particularly the longer questions - will require learners to apply this. This is the key skill that they need to tackle this qualification successfully. More are achieving this each time but there is still a considerable amount of generic material offered in the longer applied questions. It involves active use of the stimulus material as indicated in the 'indicative content' parts of the mark scheme for levels based questions. Without this application responses cannot get beyond 3-4 marks out of the 8 available for longer questions, i.e. a grade D/E level.

Whilst in preparing these papers we will always try to keep as much of the information needed for a specific question on the same page, candidates should be aware that for the later questions information from the earlier parts could be useful. The papers are designed to focus candidates on one organisation/person so that they can get a feel for them i.e. a possible real-life situation. Candidates should be made aware of this.

The requirements of some of the command words were generally known by candidates, although many did not manage to access the higher marks in the longer questions as a consideration of terms such as 'analysis' did not show enough depth in response.

It is worth noting that from June 2010 onwards there is a requirement for Quality of Written Communication (QWC) to be assessed on this paper. The marking criteria for this will be integrated into the level descriptors for two of the 8 mark questions, usually the first two that appear on the paper.

Question 1

The scenario for the whole paper was Island sailing Club. This appeared accessible to the candidates.

1(a)(i) Candidates showed a far better knowledge and understanding of the purpose of a job analysis than in previous series. Main area of confusion appeared to be in believing that the person specification is written from it rather than the job description.

1(a)(ii) Most candidates could identify 3 or 4 items expected in a job advert.

1(a)(iii) Candidates were aware of what a job description was, although rather too many of them used this as their answer rather than the question that was asked. Explanations tended to be rather brief and superficial at times - 'used to advertise the job', for example - without sufficient detail to get beyond the basic marks. Explanation at A2 needs to be precise or candidates will not access the higher marks. Time and space should not be wasted with descriptions that are not asked for also - including the latter meant that space was an issue for some candidates.

1(d)(i) This was a question where a pleasing number of candidates did try to apply the scenario, but there was also rather too much generic material from others. The most common 'applied' approach was to deal with the large range of candidates that can be reached through the internet, increasing the chances of getting the best candidate. Good responses went on from this so indicate that for a senior post such as this they would be prepared to move/travel. Other candidates rightly pointed out that it could be a more rapid process with online applications although it would be useful if candidates specifically reference this to the stimulus ('soon as possible') to convince an examiner it is applied. Unfortunately there were also many other unsubstantiated (and not always correct) claims about the role of the internet. It is important to give candidates the 'hands on' experience with the recruitment process, even if only in role play form, to be able to assess the benefits of different approaches. Rather too many candidates, for example, criticised the internet for reaching lots of people and therefore there would be lots of applications (which apparently is a problem) many totally unsuitable. The candidates perspective needs to be honed a little.

1(d)(ii) Candidates who related to the applied part of the actual role did well. The use of specialist magazines and national papers was often well explained in relation to the Head Chef, but justifying other means was difficult. Some advocates of local papers did suggest that they would have an advantage in knowing the clientele better, but all too often it was evident that this was a stock response without reference to the actual post. It is important that responses reflect the type of post in question.

1(c)(i) & (ii) Candidates seemed to enjoy the task in hand and gave thoughtful responses to both of these questions. Part (i) often went along the lines of further improvements with perhaps specific targets in mind for the restaurant. Many candidates also indicated that students are taking notice of popular cookery programmes by talking about their 'passion for cooking'. Part (ii) was roundly condemned for asking questions that would be on the CV with good candidates suggesting that this was a waste of interview time and they may not get all the information they did need. Others, quite rightly, explained that for a Head Chef experience would be far more important, especially as they may have got the qualifications many years ago. Overall there were really good applied responses.

1(d) Most candidates had identified the major fault, that a single interviewer might be biased or miss something so argued for there to be a panel. Many also suggested a group interview, although it was rarely clear how this would benefit the process for this role. Practical activities were also popular, but again the requirements of the role were perhaps not foremost here, focusing on their ability to cook something that the restaurant did at the moment so largely ignoring the role of 'Head' chef. As a result maximum marks were rare.

1(e) Candidates were well aware of the basics and the details of maternity leave.

1(f) This question produced the best applied responses over the whole paper. Candidates related the need for an induction to the chef's new environment, the potential dangers in a kitchen environment and the need for team work in a kitchen. The main barrier to achieving the very top marks was that explanation tended to be limited. Just linking the ideas of an induction to the fact that he/she used to work in a different type of kitchen only goes so far, candidates need to think why does he need to know his way around. Candidates should be reminded that for an 'explain' question, answering the 'why' in detail is important. Some candidates, for example, went on to say that there was potentially dangerous equipment or that if teamwork wasn't good then meals would not go out on time and customers would be disappointed.

Question 2

2(a)(i) &(ii) Most candidates identified at least two faults correctly in part (i) and could give some idea of potentially negative effects of these. Explanation here was often rather vague, however, with links between the processes and loss of customers/staff being rather tenuous. Hence many candidate achieved level 2 but found it difficult to access level 3 as the explanation was not detailed - why/how do poor interview processes lead to customers becoming disillusioned and leaving, for example. Some responses did deal with it well, indicating the possibility of Laura's parents leaving and affecting other's decisions through word of mouth. Others suggested that Laura and Karl's friend might be put off from applying so they might not be able to find staff and then linking this to possible effects on customer service.

2(b) The basics of the Working Time Regulations were known by most candidates and most managed some basic links to the potential working times that were stated. Unfortunately many candidates interpreted the stimulus as meaning that the under 15s worked all the hours given rather than these being the times at which they might be invited to work. As a result, marks were somewhat disappointing for this question.

2(c) Candidates were very confused about the meaning of flexible working. Many of them thought it was another way of putting 'casual workers' and indicated that they were called in when the company wanted them. This is a basic term from the specification and this type of knowledge based question will always be part of this paper.

2(d) As in question 1(d) there was some good application of stimulus material here at times, albeit not consistently, although the analysis was rather weak. Many candidates seemed to know the basics of casual and volunteer work but there was a large difference in quality of response between those who related it to the given scenario and those who did not. There are times, for example, when volunteers may not know much about the organisation they are working for or be enthusiastic (although not many for the latter) but they were told that they were members at the club. Similarly the idea that casual workers would be more enthusiastic because they were being paid in these circumstances is not realistic. There were some sound comparisons made in terms of relative skills - casual workers might have more experience/qualifications and so give a better impression - but overall there was often too much generic and even contradictory material.

2(e) In contrast to flexible working, seasonal contracts were well understood and the basic reasons for them being used were stated clearly. There was occasional confusion with casual workers when responses suggested they were just used for the regattas for example, but this was the exception here.

Question 3

3(a) As in earlier questions, the tendency for candidates to be rather superficial in their responses meant that whilst level 2 was readily achieved by many, level 3 was only rarely achieved. Many candidates quite rightly suggested that PRP would be more effective as they would 'work harder for more money' but did not apply it to the type of workforce in question so missed the opportunity to link their response to the setting of targets. Views were often rather narrow also - although a number of responses recognised that giving higher salaries would cost the company money without necessarily producing more of it, very few seemed aware that PRP should be very efficient for the company because it would only pay out if it were earning more from new members. It is important to remind students that motivation techniques should be evaluated from both the employer and employee side.

3(b)(i) Most candidates had a basic idea of what job rotation was, although development was often vague. There needs to be the idea of a regular change of role - organised by the employer - rather than just 'does different jobs'. Many candidates spent too much time saying why it was used - to motivate them or stop them getting bored - which had not been asked of them and had almost been told to them in the stimulus. 'Explain what is meant by....' not 'explain why it is used...'!

3(b)(ii) This was easily the least successful in terms of application by candidates. There did not appear to be a great time issue causing it as many candidates wrote a great deal but much (or all in many cases) of this was generic learnt material was about the advantages and disadvantages of appraisals. As has often been stated in the past, this approach will not get beyond level 1 (3 out of 8 marks) however good it is as it is not applied. Candidates need to look at the stimulus and see where/why appraisals would not be a good approach for this particular workforce. In this case, links to being able to air grievances such as being bored, discussing this and perhaps setting targets at an appraisal (some used the manager's time keeping as a good example). A few good responses saw it as a positive alternative to merely giving them warnings, but these types of approach were few and far between. A significant number of candidates did not appear to know what an appraisal was and some just dealt with it as 'target setting' without any mention of the all round approach of appraisal. An applied activity that might make it stick in their mind is to term individual learning reviews that are done with the learners for their leisure study work as appraisals - I suspect that it would at least stop the small minority who think it is only about giving praise from doing so!

Grade Boundaries

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<http://www.edexcel.com/iwantto/Pages/grade-boundaries.aspx>

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