

Examiners' Report/ Principal Examiner Feedback

January 2011

Applied GCE

GCE Travel & Tourism (6988)
Unit 2: The Travel and Tourism Customer

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Introduction

This report comments on the marking from this June moderation series. This report will comment on the assessment evidence requirements, the accuracy of the marking and the administration. There are also some general comments and details of support materials available from Edexcel.

Assessment Evidence

The tasks for the unit are set within the specification. There are four tasks for the unit, as shown on p20 of the Specification. Three of the tasks should be completed following investigation of various travel and tourism organisations. The fourth task (b) can be completed independently through dealing with customers through work experience or role plays.

The Tasks are:

- a) a description of the needs of customers in one sector of the travel and tourism industry and an explanation of how organisations in that sector attempt to meet those needs
- b) your involvement with customers in four real or simulated travel and tourism-related situations demonstrating your own customer service skills by dealing with customers in different situations including a complaint and completing relevant documentation
- c) using an appropriate methodology to research the standard of customer service within a travel and tourism organisation including documentation and the quality criteria to be used for evaluation
- d) an evaluation of customer service in a travel and tourism organisation against quality criteria and recommendations for improvements. Many centres included the tasks set in their coursework portfolios, indicating that candidates had been given correct information about the evidence requirements.

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The Travel and Tourism Organisations

Most candidates selected travel and tourism organisations to investigate. The most popular types of organisation are still visitor attractions, accommodation and airlines. For many centres all candidates in the cohort selected to investigate the same organisation. In a few centres candidates chose to study different organisations. Either approach was acceptable.

Practitioners are advised to confirm with candidates their choice of organisation and sector to ensure they have selected one that is appropriate. They may also want to liaise with the selected organisation to ensure they are able to provide access to relevant information, some of which may not be available for general public scrutiny.

Some centres are still focusing on **two or three organisations**; this does not constitute a sector.

Many centres were able to use their own facilities for task b). However these must be travel and tourism based; catering, for example, is not acceptable. Centres are permitted, however, to use a hotel scenario for one of their role plays.

Candidates may complete task c) and d) for this unit on different organisations, however this may limit them being able to progress up the grade boundary. Centres should note that tasks c) and d) should be completed and presented as discrete tasks.

Task a)

This task addresses AO1 - *demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the specified content and of related skills in vocationally related contexts.*

This task was divided into two elements. The first element consists of candidates showing knowledge by describing the needs of customers within an **entire** sector of the Industry. The second element requires candidates to demonstrate an understanding by explaining how organisations within this sector meet those customer needs.

There was a slight improvement on responses to this task this series. There was some good evidence of some candidates selecting a travel and tourism sector and covering in depth a variety of organisations within that sector. In some cases there was a greater coverage of different types of customers and their needs for the first part of this task, which is an improvement from last series.

In some centres, however, candidates are still not demonstrating an understanding of **customer needs**; in some instances many were descriptive, giving what was provided by the organisation, rather than how the organisation met the needs of customers. Some candidates are still not showing an understanding of 'needs', they consistently refer to what would be 'good' for a disabled person, what groups might 'want', or what a customer expects, rather than how their needs were met and why. Candidates need to show here that they understand what a need is; for

example something which is essential and not optional. It is necessary rather than 'good'.

For the **second** part of the task, candidates need to demonstrate an understanding by explaining how organisations within their chosen sector meet those customer needs. Overall some candidates are still not looking at more than two or three organisations from within their chosen sector. In some cases candidates are just focusing on one or two organisations from their sector. One hotel, for example, is not acceptable and this will prevent the candidates from achieving any mark higher than mark band 1. Candidates must look at a range of organisations that will cover and meet all their different customer types and needs. At times candidates gave a description of products and services that the organisation provided which were not explained and often read like a brochure.

In most cases an attempt at an explanation was given on how the organisations in that sector provided different products and services for different customers but at times candidates did not focus on how they met different customer needs.

If candidates choose the sector visitor attractions, they should focus on attractions throughout (i.e. built and natural), not just one type of attraction. The examples should then be drawn from a range of different types of attractions, to show how the sector meets those needs, especially in order to achieve higher marks.

Candidates would often confuse different sectors together, for example travel agents and tour operators. Candidates who selected travel agencies as their sector at times became confused between a travel agent and a tour operator. For example, they would start talking about a travel agent and end up talking about a tour operator and how they design a package holiday. It was clear in these instances that the candidates did not have a full understanding of what the role of a travel agent was or what the role of a tour operator was.

Centres should note these are two separate sectors and are different in terms of meeting customer needs and should not be joined together.

This also happened with airlines and airports. Centres must ensure that candidates focus on one sector only.

The majority of candidates addressed the first part of this task this series. Whilst some candidates did attempt to describe customer needs, at times they still tended to confuse this with what customers 'wanted'. Practitioners should break this task into two clear tasks one to focus on the needs of the different customers within the sector and one on how organisations within the sector meet the needs.

Some centres did find it beneficial to give the candidates a template to help them with their planning for their assignment task. This helped ensure that candidates considered all the different types of customers within their sector and their respective needs. This template was then used as a guide to help describe the customers and their needs.

The key requirements are for candidates to show knowledge and understanding through accurately identifying and describing the needs of customers in one sector

of the travel and tourism Industry, and to be able to **explain** how organisations belonging to that sector meet those needs. Practitioners and candidates should ensure that both parts of these tasks are completed.

Task b)

This task addresses AO2 - *apply the knowledge, skills and understanding specified in the subject content.*

Candidates are required to deal with **four** different types of customers and situations. One of these must be a complaint, which may be in the form of a letter. Most centres used simulations to address this task. Centres should ensure, however, that they must be from the travel and tourism sector. Catering and leisure are not acceptable; however one role play may be carried out in a Hospitality situation.

Some centres were also found to be using parents / open evenings; these are not acceptable for this task.

All candidates showed evidence of their dealings with customers in mainly simulated situations. In some cases it was unclear what types of customer had been dealt with, as some assessors gave a clear and detailed scenario but just stated 'a customer' as a type. Centres must give a clear description of the type of customer being dealt with. All of the scenarios were in travel and tourism contexts.

If candidates intend to demonstrate customer service through work experience, the centre should ensure this experience is within a travel and tourism organisation as appropriate to the components in unit 1. Assessors should also note that it is the centre assessor who must witness the candidate dealing with the different types of customers and situations and not the staff within the work experience organisation. A work experience report is not sufficient evidence for this task.

For this task, candidates should deal with a range of situations and a range of customers. For a significant number of candidates, evidence did not always show the nature of the situation or type of customer. The needs and circumstances of the customer should be given to candidates in detail, and in order for them to access the higher mark bands it is advisable for the practitioner to include complex situations. An example of a complex situation can be found on page 28 of the Specification in the assessment guidance for mark band 3.

At times centres simply state an 'individual' or a 'customer' and do not give a clear indication as to the different types of customers and their different needs. Therefore mark band 1 could only be achieved here.

Most of the situations ranged from straightforward to complex, however using a telephone is not a face-to-face process in communicating with customers and may therefore limit candidates in achieving the higher mark bands. Centres should also note that a Power Point presentation given at a welcome meeting without dealing with customer situations at the end is not acceptable evidence for this task. If a welcome meeting is undertaken, there must be clear evidence of the different

situations and types of customer the candidate has dealt with. A detailed witness statement assessed against the assessment criteria, highlighting how and where the candidates have achieved the criteria must also be included.

There was once again evidence this series of candidates taking part in welcome meetings. Although this scenario is acceptable the evidence must show how the candidate has interacted with the customers and met their different needs. In most cases all the evidence submitted only demonstrated candidates giving an overview of a resort to a group of customers. If candidates are involved with dealing with different customers after their presentation, then different scenarios must be included for this with detailed witness statements showing how and where they achieved the assessment criteria.

At times there was clear evidence of candidates meeting the needs of customers, however supplementary needs were unclear.

There was an improvement in the documentation completed by the candidates during their role plays this series. For example, if the candidate is given a situation of booking a holiday, there should be an enquiry sheet filled in followed by a booking form and possibly a receipt book. There was evidence of this type of documentation, completed in detail by the candidates, this series.

Grade Boundaries

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