Moderators' Report/
Principal Moderator Feedback

June 2011

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

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General introduction

This report comments on the marking from this June 2011 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.

1. Assessment Evidence

The tasks for the unit are set within the specification. There are four tasks for the unit as shown on p21 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 entire sector of the Industry and an explanation of how the organisations, in that sector meets those needs.
b. Customers have been dealt with in four real or simulated travel and tourism situations. A complaint is dealt with.
c. A method is proposed for evaluating customer service and documentation is produced.
d. An evaluation of customer service in a travel and tourism organisation covering quality criteria, with conclusions and recommendations.

Included in many portfolios were the tasks set by the centre, indicating that candidates had been given correct information about the evidence requirements.

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 minority of centres, candidates chose to study different organisations. Either approach was acceptable.

Teachers are advised to confirm with candidates, their choice of organisation and sector to ensure they have selected one that is appropriate. Teachers 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 is not acceptable, however. Centres are permitted 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 good improvement on 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.

However, in some centres, 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 or 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” rather than optional is not ”good”, it is necessary.

Example for the first part of Task A:

Types of Customers and Needs of Customers from the Airline Sector

- One of the customers for this sector would be a Business Person.
- One or their **needs** is **speed**.
- Business people are always running to a tight schedule due to the nature of their job. They may be coming straight from one meeting heading to another in a different city, and therefore they may have limited time to check in with the airline. They cannot afford to miss their planned flight as this may result in money lost or failing to meet company deadlines.
- They may also not have baggage to check in as this may only be an overnight stay or a day visit, and therefore do not have the time, or want to stand in a check in queue for twenty minutes, as they may have

work to complete or phone calls to make prior to the next meeting. Therefore they want to be able to check themselves in quickly and find somewhere quiet to make phone calls and use their laptop or read over documents prior to their meeting.

Centres are advised that the above example is only ONE out of a wide range of a business person's needs.

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, this is not acceptable and this does not meet any mark bands higher than low Mark Band 2. Candidates must look at a range of organisations that will cover and meet the need of 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') and 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, particularly at higher marks.

Candidates would often confuse different sectors together for example travel agents and tour operators. For the candidates who selected **travel agencies** as their sector, at times they became confused between the difference between a travel agent and a tour operator. For example they might start talking about a travel agent but 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 as was seen this series.

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

More candidates did address the first part of this task, this series and did attempt to describe the needs however at times some candidates still tended to describe what products and services the different customers wanted and not what their different needs were. Assessors 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 they have considered all the different types of customers within their sector and their needs. This template was then used as a guide to help candidates describe the needs and the customers. However, if a template is used, the assessor needs to ensure that the candidate is describing the needs and how they are being met and not just providing lists.

The key requirement is 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 being able to **explain** how organisations belonging to that sector meet those needs. Assessors 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 of the centres seen used simulations to address this task which is perfectly fine, however centres should note 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 evenings/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 them in detail and in order for them to access the higher mark bands, it is advisable for the assessor to include complex situations. An example of a complex situation can be found on p28 of the specification, in the Assessment guidance for Mark Band 3.

At times centres just state an ‘individual’ or a ‘customer’ and do not give a clear indication 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 an face-to-face process in communicating with customers and therefore may limit candidates 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 situation and type of customer the candidate has dealt with. Along with a detailed witness statement assessed against the mark band statements, highlighting how and where the candidates have achieved the criteria.

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 criteria.

At times there was clear evidence of candidates meeting 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 maybe a Receipt book. This series, these types of documentation were evident and were completed in detail by the candidates.

There was some evidence that some centres graded each situation, and awarded a different mark band point score for each situation, this can lead to confusion and in future an overall assessment of how the candidate has achieved throughout the grade boundaries should be completed, at the end of all the practical work. However, it is expected that for each situation dealt with, there is a witness testimony, observation statement or assessment checklist, highlighting how the candidates have performed. Whichever format is used, it should include an outline of the scenario presented to the candidate (if simulated) or the context of the situation (if real). The type of customer should be identified. Candidates’ performance should be described. The description should be sufficient for a non-observer to be able to support any assessment decisions made. It should make reference to key requirements of the task. There should be a summary assessment statement for each situation. Each testimony/statement/checklist should be signed and dated by an assessor. Any supporting evidence, such as completed membership application forms, booking forms, receipts, etc., should also be submitted. This further authenticates the candidate performance.

Witness statements should be detailed and mapped against the mark band statements, they should highlight how and where the candidate has achieved the criteria. Centres should note that the witness statements produced by the assessor for this series' moderation were more detailed than last series, however, at times there was not enough written evidence by the assessor to sufficiently reflect the requirements of the various mark bands.

Some candidates are still submitting scripts of their role-plays of how they performed; assessors should note that this is not required for this task as this does not show application and suggests that the candidate may not been involved in dealing directly with customers.

Some candidates are still including evaluations of their performance within their portfolios. Assessors should note that this is **not** required as supporting evidence for this task.

The key requirement is for candidates to apply their knowledge and understanding of the key needs of customers and that appropriate communication skills have been demonstrated and that a customer-focused approach has been demonstrated.

When a letter was used as evidence for a candidate dealing with a complaint, the evidence tended to be poor and not up to industry standards due, to poor spelling and grammar ,lack of company logo, address and date. Candidates sometimes tended to offer customers unrealistic compensation, for example, free holidays.

Although overall there was some improvement within this task by centres. Assessors should note that the comments they write concerning the candidates' performance are paramount to the moderation process.

Task C

This task addresses AO3 – *use appropriate research techniques to obtain information to analyse vocationally - related issues and problems. This task is divided into two parts.*

Candidates must propose a method for evaluating customer service, design appropriate documentation which will aid and capture data and ensure that appropriate quality criteria have been used.

The second part of this task requires candidates to give an explanation of why the chosen methodology is appropriate for their organisation.

There was an improvement this series, with some candidates showing improved research techniques in terms of the documentation produced. Some candidates produced detailed documentation for their methodology, which included quality criteria and specific quality criteria and a system to assess in terms or performance of organisation. Candidates generally chose a point score of 1-10 or a system using excellent good and poor. Some centres did not include any assessment method in their documentation, which limit the transfer of data to a spread sheet. This design resulted in a tick sheet.

The majority of candidates chose at least two different methods of research and designed appropriate documentation to use; however, they tended not to refer to benchmark standards and instead just stated the quality criteria that they were going to use. In most cases there was no evidence of bench mark standards in the documentation in task C.

However, most of the candidates did choose an appropriate method for evaluating customer service, and designed appropriate documentation for the selected method.

In the majority of cases the candidates chose either a survey, an interview or mystery shopper exercise, or in most cases, two of these. Some quality criteria were mentioned and described, there was some reference made to benchmark standards in their discussions, this series. However, there is no evidence of these being shown on the documentation. In some instances, the candidates referred to the different choice of questions for their documentation, instead of the different quality criteria they had chosen to investigate.

Centres should note that for the higher mark bands, candidates must not only give quality criteria but also specific aspects of quality criteria and benchmark standards should also be included. The documentation must also be designed to support analysis of data that is easily transferred to a spread sheet or database and contain benchmark standards.

Benchmark standards for visitor attractions can be found on the *Visit Britain* website. The *Association of Leading Visitor Attractions* may also have some benchmarking data used for standards. Candidates can also make up their own benchmark quality criteria or use criteria from a similar organisation.

An explanation is given of why the methodology type is appropriate for the research to be undertaken, but not always on how it is appropriate for the chosen organisation Candidates still tend to list mainly advantages and disadvantages of the different methods, e.g. "surveys are quick and easy",, and not give an explanation of why their chosen methodology was suitable for the organisation. Many were found to be commenting on how the methodology type was suitable for the candidate and not the related organisation.

Although the majority of centres used the same organisations for task C and D in some cases different organisations were used. Although this is acceptable it may limit the candidates progressing up the mark bands.

The key requirements hear is for candidates to show **analysis** of the use of different research methodologies and their appropriateness for their organisations. Candidates should ensure that both parts of the task are completed and that the focus of their evidence is analysis.

Some candidate's work did not contain the documentation. Assessors should note the design and structure of the documentation is the focal point for this task and determines the mark band awarded, if the documentation is not included midpoint Mark Band 1 would be awarded.

Task D

This task addresses AO4 – *plan and carry out investigations and tasks in which they examine vocationally related issues and problems; gather, record and analyse relevant information and evidence; and evaluate evidence, make reasoned judgements and present conclusions.*

Candidates are required to research **one** organisation, and carry out an evaluation of customer service covering a range of quality criteria with a link to bench mark standards. Conclusions should be drawn and recommendations made.

In this series of moderation, there was a good improvement for some centres in terms of the evaluations produced by the candidates, but on the whole, evaluations still tend to be basic and more descriptive than evaluative. Candidates did base their discussions on their results. However, in the majority of cases, candidates did not link their results to benchmark standards.

In some instances, it was found that candidates are not carrying out an evaluation of their organisation, but instead they are just describing their interpretation of their graphs. Centres should note this is not evaluation and graphs should only be used to substantiate the candidate's conclusions, recommendations and findings.

Conclusions made at times were straightforward with some recommendations for improvement, but at these sometimes tended to be more product-focused and not customer-service focused. Therefore, in some of cases MB1 was best fit.

To fully achieve MB2, assessors should note that there must be some depth to the evaluations, with reasoning in their judgements and conclusions made. These should be substantiated either through data supplied by the organisation or through surveys of customers, staff etc.

It was found that candidates did not understand the concept of substantiation and therefore conclusions were often limited. In the majority of cases the research was only based on the candidates' own experience and not on evidence gathered through surveys of staff and customers, or through data from their chosen organisation.

Recommendations should be customer-service focused and not product-focused and the evaluation should be objective and not subjective, as was found in the majority of cases.

In the majority of the sample, the results were based on the candidates' own opinion and at times results could be limited as candidates tended to ask closed questions, where a 'yes' or 'no' answer was all that was needed, therefore limiting their evidence.

To conclude, it was clearly evident that some of the candidates had carried out a vast amount of research. Unfortunately instead of taking this statistical information and using it through out their evaluations, they tended to just describe the contents of their various diagrams and pie charts, and not carry out an evaluation. This does not address the task.

The key requirement is for candidates to assess, and they should ensure that all parts of the task are addressed and that the focus is on evaluation and their evidence should show them making an assessment or judgement.

At times some of the questions used were product-focused questions and not customer -service focused.

There was some good practice demonstrated by centres this year by using secondary research from their organisations to further substantiate their findings and conclusions. Some candidates also used *Trip Adviser*, which was another good way to substantiate and justify their findings, conclusions and evaluations.

Additional Evidence

Candidates do not need to show coverage of the 'what you need to learn' section, but to use these as guidance in answering the questions posed in the tasks.

2. Marking

For the June series, marking at times was inaccurate. There was a tendency to be generous, especially when awarding the higher mark bands. Assessors are reminded to focus on the descriptors given in the assessment grid when making judgements on candidates' performance. The starting point should be to determine the 'best fit' Mark Band. Assessors are advised to use the full range of marks available within the Mark Band. To facilitate this, assessors are advised to start at the mid point in the range of marks available within a Mark Band and move up or down based on the strengths or weaknesses of candidates work. Assessors' comments justifying their choice of mark band and mark awarded, would have assisted the moderation process.

Moderators do find it useful where assessors annotate candidate work. Annotation should focus on the Mark Band descriptors. For example, in task A annotation could highlight clearly which sector has been selected by the different types of customers – the range of customers and the needs accurately produced by the candidate. In task B annotation could show where the candidate has dealt with the different customers where they have met a need, and where they have met a complex need. In task C annotation could highlight where there is evidence of analysis. If these were against the relevant statements, the moderator need only look at these aspects to be able to draw a conclusion regarding the accuracy of the marking. For task D the assessor could highlight each reasoned conclusion and where the conclusions were substantiated it is also essential for moderators to see the pen portraits used in tasks.

Centres are encouraged to annotate throughout the candidates work, and should note that ticks are not annotation. Page numbering of candidates' work cross-referenced to the tasks would be beneficial to the moderation process.

3. Administration

The deadline for submission of portfolios for moderation was met, by the majority of centres.

Assessors should ensure, therefore, that where additional support has been provided to a candidate, or where a candidate has made an overuse of printed material from internet sites or large sections from text books, these are not credited. A statement to that effect for the moderator would assist the process.

The correct sample was not always sent as centres tend not to include the highest or lowest if they have not got an asterisk at them.

Authenticity sheets were not always included with the work, in order to confirm it was the candidates' own work.

Mark record sheets were included but at times not completed properly, in terms of the candidate name and number and there were some addition errors. Centres should also ensure that the candidates' name and number are also on other parts of the assignment, as well as the record mark sheet.

Assessor feedback sheets lacked detail and did not always relate to the mark band statements.

4. General Comments

Types of Evidence

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.

This unit allows the opportunity for oral communication in dealing with four types of customers. If this format is used, candidates' portfolios should include witness testimonies, assessment checklist or observation statement. This should describe candidate's performance, and highlight how this leads to 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, audio tapes and 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) and it is this that should be sent to the moderator. Printed versions of documents can be sent in support.

General Performance

Overall, candidates showed some knowledge of their chosen sector and the different types of customers needs, however, were mainly lists and not exemplified.

In task B some candidates were able to handle a complex situation with a specified customer; however, documentation was at times weak. Types of customers were not always clear.

Candidates were able to collect research on different methods of methodology, for task C and select at least one method and design their own documentation for collecting data. Benchmark standards were not always included in the work and the majority of candidates chose more than one method of research.

Task D answers showed a lack of analysis, and conclusions and recommendations were mainly straightforward and not matched to benchmark standards.

At times candidates addressed the first part of tasks and not the second – this occurred in task A, where the focus was mainly on organisations and how they meet the needs of customers.

Overall there was a slight improvement in this series, especially with task B and task C.

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