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Examiners' Report/
Principal Examiner Feedback

June 2011

GCE Travel and Tourism (6994)
Unit 8: Current Issues in Travel and Tourism

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General Introduction

This report provides general guidance and a summary of the key messages from the June 2011 series, along with comments regarding the accuracy of assessment and the administration process.

Key Messages

Task (a)

Many of the selected issues to be the focus of the research were unclear. Some candidates still described a topic rather than selecting a specific issue to be the focus. A few candidates focused simply on an event, i.e. the Icelandic volcano eruption. Some candidates put forward a proposal that focused the finding of an issue rather than describe the issue to be the focus of the investigation, for example, 'The effect of economy on the travel and tourism industry'. Whilst the topic is appropriate, the issue is unclear. Is it all of the travel and tourism industry? What is the specific issue relating to the economy? In this series when issues were vague, candidates appeared to find it more difficult to consider exactly what they are investigating for their project. The less able candidate plans tended to be quite general and the methodologies lacked detail. If the issue is phrased more clearly and addresses an issue, e.g. 'Do the Government's spending cuts result in fewer people travelling abroad', candidates may find the task more accessible to access higher marks throughout. For this task, if the issue is clear then there is more scope for the methodology to be detailed and to explain rather than describe how the aims will be met. Candidates too will be able to describe the issue rather than simply provide information about a topic. Using the example above, candidates could scope out the industries to be investigated, e.g. airlines, travel agents, tour operators, etc. Candidates can also scope the extent of the issue.

The detail given in the plans this series varied. Most research plans generally gave some detail of activities to be undertaken to meet aims. In a few samples, however, timescales were not considered which impacted on task B. Many candidates gave some detail in the description of the methodology to be used and more did describe in detail as to how the aims will be met. The more able candidates were able to explain how the aims will be met and the methodology.

Task (b)

Evidence for this task was much improved with many candidates showing some form of updating and more showing evidence of following their plan. Fewer candidates submitted an evaluation, i.e. what they did each week, which is good as this evidence relates to task D rather than task B. In more samples there was evidence of a working document which was good, however, there were still a number of candidates who simply stated what was achieved rather than rescheduling the plan, i.e. rescheduling of dates, activities and the adding of additional activities to the original plan as the investigation progresses.

Task (c)

Overall most candidates used a range of sources of research including primary and secondary sources. In many samples the research skills were good. Many candidates referenced work although in some cases referencing was limited to websites in the body of the text. Analysis varied between candidates. There was some good analysis which demonstrated a good level of understanding of findings. Those candidates that set clear perimeters in task A and selected a clear issue, were often the candidates that gave a clear and or comprehensive analysis of the issue and were able to clearly consider the effects on the travel and tourism industry. In some samples, the focus was on the impact/effects for a consumer rather than the effect of an issue on the travel and tourism industry. This was often as a result of not having a clear issue at the outset.

Task (d)

It was clear those centres that had followed the guidance in the moderator's report. There were significantly more candidates considering all aspects of the project, however, there were a few centres which evaluated the findings, i.e. evidence for this task was the conclusion of finding which should be part of task C, rather than evaluating the project (i.e. process and methodology used). Conclusions varied, however many were straightforward or subjective. There were, however, a few exceptional evaluations which gave detail and considered the whole process using evidence from their assessor comments or plan to substantiate 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 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 (AO's) for the qualification. These AO's are given on p155 of the specification.

For task B in some, but far fewer than the previous series, the evidence was limited in terms of capturing the updating of the plan and how well the plan was followed. It is recommended that an original plan is submitted for A and an updated plan showing any of the changes updated by the candidate and regularly reviewed by the assessor be submitted for task B. The evidence for task B should be evidence of a working document rather than a reflective account of changes.

The tasks are already pre set by Edexcel.

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; however, candidates should investigate a recent issue, i.e. 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 as the focus of the project and they are able to consider in-depth how the planning should go. When candidates did not achieve many marks for this task it was often due to unclear issues, i.e. a broad topic such as climate change or evidence simply describing an event.

The evidence expected for this task would therefore include 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'.

(source:http://wordnet.princeton.edu/perl/webwn?s=issue)

The other evidence expected for this task would be a plan that shows the project aims and should consider the parameters of the study. There should also be consideration of the research methodology to be used. Therefore to access higher marks, candidates should consider the level of detail included in the plan. For Mark Band 3, an explanation of how the project aims will be met and the research methodology used should be evident. Candidates should therefore 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 allow the higher marks for task C to be met.

There were a number of different topics covered. In a number of cases the issue to be the focus of the enquiry was unclear or a topic rather than an issue described, e.g. the impact of terrorism on the travel and tourism industry. Overall, there were fewer candidates whose research proposal covered an event, such as the Haiti earthquake, rather than an issue which is encouraging.

The plans were varied in presentation. Some showed detail, although this varied between centres. Whilst the methodologies were often described in some detail, fewer candidates described in some detail how the aims will be met. In some cases candidates made an attempt to give an explanation of how the project aims will be met and an attempt to explain how the research methodology to be used, however, evidence in some instances was theoretical rather than applied to their plan, i.e. candidates gave general advantages and disadvantages of using questionnaires for research. The explanation of how the aims would be met was often the weakest area. Parameters were common this series, although the level of detail varied.

Timescales were usually given and were realistic. There were, however, a few candidates who did not set timescales which impacted on task B. The plan should be submitted before the project is carried out. The plan should not be retrospective as was the case in a few samples. Task D provides the opportunity for reflection and proposals for change.

The plan could consider the following:

- Dates
- Aims and objectives
- How the aims and objectives will be met?
- Research tools/methods to be used to meet aims and objectives
- Target dates
- What could go wrong? What could the candidate do to sort this?
- Contingency planning.

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, i.e. a working document. A good example of this task is when candidates regularly updated the plan, rescheduling as required and using contingency plans when problems occurred. When candidates did not achieve many marks for this task it was often due to poor following of the plan. Most attempted to give some updating.

Evidence expected would show how well the candidate worked independently and how well the candidate 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 or, a statement from the candidate. At Mark Band 2 it is expected that the candidate will update the plan not just state what they did. Those candidates that did show some changes to the plans many still did not show the rescheduling of any aims or timescales. There was overall limited evidence relating to contingency plans. Most candidates achieved aims set although those candidates who gave really focused plans with clear perimeters in task A, tended to be the candidates that clearly achieved their aims.

The plan could consider updating the following:

- Revised aims and objectives
- Whether aims and objectives were met
- Updated research to be used to meet aims and objectives
- Reviewed target dates
- Changes needed and why
- Updating of contingencies
- Achievement dates

- Additional research required and why
- 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. 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. In some samples evidence was not linked to the effect on the travel and tourism industry or a specific sector. The research should be that as indicated in the plan (task A). For many candidates the methodology used did follow the plan and often additional sources were used but there was limited indication why additional sources were needed. Only a few candidates gave an explanation for the need for the additional sources.

Evidence expected for this task is a bibliography and/or referencing indicating the sources used. For higher marks awarded 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 samples, more than the previous series, this was evident.

Most candidates did attempt to reference and source work as well as submit a bibliography or terms of reference. There usually was a range of different sources used in the bibliography; however, in some samples, the referencing simply related to simply websites and the primary research rather than the full range of sources identified in the bibliography. In the more able candidates, however, they did use the full spectrum of sources identified in the plan as well as additional sources required as the project developed. Most candidates used both primary and secondary research and more used a range of techniques, e.g. secondary sources, interview, emails, etc. Some candidates exceeded sources identified in the plan; however, few gave an explanation of why these sources were required (task B).

Evidence of the effect of the issue on the travel and tourism industry or one of its component sectors should be analytical rather than a description of findings of the issue. The quality of the analysis varied. There was some very detailed analysis in some samples, yet in others, 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 where it most happened was when candidates used an event rather than a current issue or where an issue was unclear, i.e. a topic rather than an issue or a broad question. Whilst some candidates did relate the analysis to the effect on the travel and tourism industry others were general in the content or did not consider the effect instead how the industry had affected 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 methodology used. A good example of this task is when candidates evaluate with objectivity and reasoning and provide detailed recommendations. When candidates did not achieve many marks for this task it was often due to limited coverage/detail and or due to the subjectivity of the evaluation.

Evidence did vary across centres. In some samples there were good detailed evaluations that clearly addressed the requirements of the task. There were, however, some samples where candidates did evaluate the project as a whole however the content was brief. It felt like the candidates had insufficient time to complete the task. There were some candidates, although significantly fewer than the previous series that just evaluated the methodology rather than the whole projector simply evaluated the finding from task C. Where the evidence of the evaluation was brief rather than detailed it was because there was limited coverage of the whole project or because each aspect evaluated had limited detail.

Recommendations and acknowledgements of the limitations varied but in many the limitations were limited. To access the higher marks then candidates should give depth in the evaluation and use the evidence to support objective conclusions. The more able candidates did try and give some objectivity, which was good. More candidates were starting to substantiate their conclusions.

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?
- Where the parameters too wide or too narrow?
- Did I meet all 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 work independently?
- What would I do differently if I did this research project again? (E.g. 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?

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.

Marking

All candidates had attempted all tasks. Assessment was found to be generally consistent but overall some marking was generous. 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. Marking was generally within the appropriate mark band, however, in some cases there was strength evident to move beyond the mid-point. In task B, in some cases there was evidence of updating, and in some the evidence was holistically more characteristic of Mark Band 2 rather than 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 work is descriptive Mark Band 1 applies. Mark Band 2 could only be considered appropriate if candidates show some evaluation with some reasoned conclusions. 'Best fit' would need to be considered where there are descriptions and some evaluation would be required 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)

Marking of this task was marginally, rather than significantly, generous. High marks at Mark Band 1 were often awarded with limited strength to move much beyond the mid-point, i.e. there was no attempt to describe how the aims would be met or the methodology to be used; the issue described was unclear and had no 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 explanation as to how the aims will be met and an explanation of the methodology to be used. In some cases the description of the issue to be the focus of the project was unclear and or not comprehensive.

Task (b)

Marking of this task was generous in some samples, mainly when higher mark bands were awarded or the top of a mark band. Frequently higher marks at Mark Band 2 were awarded for evidence that showed no strengths/traits of the higher mark band. When marking was generous it was often because the evidence of updating was not evident or limited.

Task (c)

Marking of this task was usually 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. 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 sector. In some samples, awarded marks at Mark Band 2, the analysis was limited and mainly descriptive and made limited links to the effect on the travel and tourism industry. In some samples the top of the mark band was awarded yet there were limited traits of the higher mark band, i.e. the top of Mark Band 1 was awarded yet there was very limited attempt to reference sources; evidence focused mainly on websites and analysis was overall basic rather than parts starting to be clear. In a few samples awarded high Mark Band 3 there was not a range of techniques used.

Task (d)

Marking of this task varied. 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. Some samples awarded mark band two had subjective conclusions and recommendations lacked detail. In a few samples marks in the higher mark bands were awarded for simply a conclusion of the research findings.

Administration

OPTEMS forms were generally completed correctly.

Samples submitted were generally 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. However, some Candidate Authentication Sheets, Candidate Mark

Record Forms and Mark Record Forms were not fully completed,with missing candidate numbers, or in some cases, candidate signatures. The majority of Centres completed Feedback Sheets in some detail. There were, however, a few centres which did not use any feedback forms.

Most centres did submit Candidate Authentication Records. This is a JCGQ requirement. Exams Officers have copies of generic forms that can be used but these are also available on the Edexcel website.

Annotation on coursework was in some centres limited. Please note that this is now a JCGQ requirement. Annotation should highlight where key evidence could be found, e.g. 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 the candidate has given an explanation as to how the aims will be met, where there is detail in the methodology and description of the issue.

In task B, an individual statement could relate to how well the candidate 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. Where aims have been met could be annotated and any relevant content in the evaluation relating to meeting deadlines, aims etc.

In task C, annotation could highlight where the candidate 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 the candidate 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.

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 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, audiotapes 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.

Further guidance and support

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