Principal Moderator Feedback

Summer 2012

GCE Travel & Tourism (6994)
Paper 01

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Unit 8: Current Issues in Travel and Tourism

General Introduction

This report provides general guidance and a summary of the key messages from the June 2012 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 for research rather than selecting a specific issue to be the focus, for example, 'is the travel agent on the high street affected by online sales'. A few candidates focused simply on reporting an event. Some candidates put forward a proposal that focused on the finding of an issue rather than describing the issue to be the focus of the investigation, for example, 'The effect of the economy on the travel and tourism industry'. A better issue would be; has the instability of the euro resulted in fewer people travelling abroad? Or Have the Olympic Games resulted in more people staying in Britain? This gives candidates a specific focus and they can actually analyse whether these are the problems or if something else is also causing the downturn in tourists travelling abroad. When issues are vague, candidates find it more difficult to consider exactly what they are investigating for their project. Amongst less able candidates plans tended to be quite general and the methodologies lacked detail. 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. Candidates should scope out the industries to be investigated, e.g. airlines, travel agents, tour operators, etc.

The detail given in the plans this series varied. Most research plans generally gave some detail of activities to be undertaken to meet aims with timescales. Many candidates gave some detail in the description of the methodology to be used and more did describe in detail how the aims would be met. Sometimes marks were awarded from mark band three so evidence should show plans that explain how the project aims will be met. Sometimes this could not be found.

Task (b)

Evidence for this task was generally good 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. Some candidates completed a log which did not refer to the plan submitted in task a). In some cases candidates completed the plan for task a) in task b) with changes. When this approach was taken marks awarded tended to be fewer as candidates focused on the changes and not on a plan with sufficient detail of the aims to maximise the marks achieved in task a).

Task (c)

For a few candidates, often those who did not have a clear issue presented in task a), it was difficult to ascertain the purpose of some of the research undertaken.

Overall most candidates used a range of sources of research including primary and secondary sources. There is a definite movement towards using a wide range of types of secondary research, not just websites. In many samples the research skills were good and many candidates referenced work throughout. Most candidates submitted a bibliography.

Analysis varied between candidates. There was some good analysis, however often candidates produced analysis of some of the answers they received in their primary research rather than analysing their issue and using their research findings to support their analysis.

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 who evaluated the findings, which should be part of task c), rather than evaluating the project (i.e. process and methodology used). Recommendations tended to be the main area of weakness. In some instances the limitations of the project were not considered and the recommendations were very limited in detail.

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 p103 of the specification. Each task targets one of the Assessment Objectives (AO's) for the qualification. These AO's are given on p166 of the specification.

It is recommended that an original plan is submitted for task 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.

The evidence should include:

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 or a topic for research.

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)

If candidates select an event or topic, then it is not an important question which is in dispute and cannot therefore be resolved. Specific terrorist attacks are events which may form part of the research undertaken when investigating an issue but alone they do not constitute issues.

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 marks to be awarded 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.

The plans 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 would be met. In some cases candidates made an attempt to give an explanation of how the project aims would be met and an attempt to explain 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, 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. Of 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 – through the process the candidate may be required to make changes to the initial aim(s) and objectives set.
- Indication of whether the aims and objectives have been achieved.
- Achievement dates - dates set could be updated to indicate whether they have been achieved.
- Reviewed target dates - dates could be changed / updated to indicate a revised schedule for an activity where deadlines have not been achieved. If one date is changed it may be likely that it has an impact on the overall schedule and therefore a revised timeline may be required.

- Additional activities and target dates added - it is likely throughout the process that candidates will need to add additional activities to their plan e.g. they may find a link to a new resource. In these instances the plan should be modified to take account of these changes. Any additional research methods /sources required could be documented here, although this evidence is credited in task (c) (i.e. reasons for the additional sources).

Please note that the explanation is only a characteristic of Mark Band 3 in task c).

- Changes documented including reasons
- Updating of contingencies
- 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.

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.

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. 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.

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.

Recommendations and acknowledgements of the limitations varied but in many the limitations were limited. To access the higher marks 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?
- What did I find limiting?

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. For example if the candidate identifies time management as an area of weakness, they could substantiate their conclusions by referring to unachieved dates within their plan, assessor feedback for task b) relating to poor time management 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.

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. 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 would 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 limited or the entire plan was obviously written after the project was completed.

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. Sometimes the analysis submitted was of primary research findings rather than of the issue itself.

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.

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.

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 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

Centre are reminded that a range of tutor materials, including example schemes of work and assignment briefs, are available to support this qualification. A range of training opportunities are also available to support centre assessors. Further details can be found at Edexcel Online: www.edexcel.com/resources/training

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