

Principal Moderator Feedback

Summer 2016

GCE Travel & Tourism (6988)
Paper 01 The Travel and Tourism
Customer

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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.

1. Assessment Evidence

The tasks for the unit are set within the specification. There are four tasks for the unit and shown on page 21 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 students had been given correct information about the evidence requirements.

The Travel and Tourism Organisations

Most students selected travel and tourism organisations to investigate. The most popular type of organisations are still Accommodation, Tourist Attractions and Airlines. For many centres all students in the cohort selected to investigate the same organisation. In a minority of centres, students chose to study different organisations. Either approach was acceptable.

Teachers are advised to confirm with students, 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. Welcome Meeting scenarios although acceptable MUST highlight and demonstrate how and where the students have met different customer needs.

Some centres are still applying all their tasks to the Hospitality sector.

Students 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 students showing knowledge by describing the needs of customers within an **entire** sector of the Industry. The second element requires students to demonstrate an understanding by explaining how organisations within this sector meet those customer needs.

There was some significant improvement on this task this series. There was some good practice demonstrated by some students in that they selected the Airline sector and covered in depth a variety of organisations within that sector. In some cases there was a greater focus on different types of customers and their needs for the first part of this task.

In some centres, Students 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 students are still not showing an understanding of “needs”, they consistently refer to what would be “suitable” for a family or what groups might “want”, or what a customer expects, rather than how their needs were met and why. Students need to show here that they understand what a need is for example something which is “essential” and not optional, is it is not “good” it is necessary.

For the **SECOND** part of the task, students need to demonstrate an understanding by explaining how organisations within their chosen sector meet those customer needs. Overall some students are still not looking at a whole sector and are still focusing on two or three organisations from within their chosen sector. In some cases students are just focusing on one or two organisations from their sector, for example where the student has selected the Visitor Attractions sector, they have tended to focus on “Built” attractions and not spread their examples through a selection of “built” and “natural” examples. One or two examples is not acceptable and this does not meet any mark bands higher than mark band 1 or low mark band 2. Students must look at a range of organisations that will cover and meet the need of all their different customer types and needs..

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 students did not focus on how they met different customer needs.

Some students this series selected Airlines as their sector but tended to write about Airports. Centres should not Airlines and Airports are taken as two separate sectors. High end airlines are not always addressed as the students tended to focus on budget airlines.

More students did address the first part of this task, this series and did attempt to describe the needs however at times some students 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.

There are some centres who are still merging these two tasks. This is a disadvantage to the students as they tend to focus their evidence on either the first part or the second part and never address both parts.

Some centres did find it beneficial to give the students a template to help them with the task, however the students if they use this format must describe in detail within the grids of how the organisations meet the different needs of different customers and not just write brief points. This format though does help 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 students describe the needs and the customers.

The Key requirement is for students 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 students 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.*

Students 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 and Catering and Leisure are not acceptable.

However, one role play may be carried out in a Hospitality situation.

Some Centres are not completing four face to face role plays in some samples only one face to face role play was complete and the student had

been awarded mark band 3 whereas mark band 1 was best fit. For the higher mark bands at least three role plays must be face to face.

Once again in this series of moderation, there was evidence of students taking part in Welcome Meetings. Although this scenario is acceptable the evidence must clearly demonstrate how the student have interacted with their customers and met their different needs. In most cases all the evidence submitted, only demonstrated students giving an overview of a resort or destination to a group of customers. If students 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. Welcome Meeting scenarios although acceptable must highlight and demonstrate how and where the students have met different customer needs. Centres should note that a power point presentation of a destination on its own does not demonstrate how students have met the different needs of different customers listed in the specification.

At times there was clear evidence of students meeting needs of customers, however supplementary needs were not always evident in the work or witness statements.

All students 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 did not always give 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. Most of the scenarios that were seen were in travel and tourism contexts.

If students 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 student 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, students should deal with a range of situations and a range of customers. For a significant number of students, 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 page 28 of the specifications in the Assessment guidance for Mark Band 3.

Most of the situations ranged from straightforward to complex, however using a Telephone or responding to an email is not a Face to Face process in communicating with customers and therefore may limit students achieving the higher mark bands. To achieve the higher mark bands at least 3 scenarios must be face to face situations.

There were several centres this year, who only completed one face to face role play. The other role-plays were either written or telephoned based. One face to face role –play limits students to mark band 1.

There was an improvement in the documentation completed by the students during their role plays this series. For example if the student 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 students.

Centres should note it is expected that for each situation dealt with, there is a witness testimony, observation statement or assessment checklist, highlighting how the students has performed. Whichever format is used, it should include an outline of the scenario presented to the student (if simulated) or the context of the situation (if real). The type of customer should be identified. Student's 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 student performance.

Some Students 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 student may not been involved in dealing directly with customers

The Key requirement is for students 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 student dealing with a complaint, the evidence tended to be poor and not up to Industry standards due, to poor spelling, grammar, lack of company logo, address, date and offer of compensation.

Students sometimes tended to offer customers unrealistic comments and compensation offers; for example, free "we will train our staff again "or "70 % off a stay for you and your whole party". Centres should note this would not be deemed as mirroring industry standard language.

Centres may wish to help the students with this task by having the student's interview managers from the travel and tourism sector on what sort of compensation they offer for different situations. This may help student's offer more realistic compensation in their letters.

Centres should note that the witness statements produced by the assessor for this session's 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.

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

Task C

This task addresses A03 – use appropriate research techniques to obtain information to analyse vocationally - related issues and problems. This task is divided into two parts.

Students are to 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 students to give an explanation of why the chosen methodology is appropriate for their organisation.

There was good improvement this year with some students showing improved research techniques in terms of the documentation produced. Some students produced detailed documentation for their methodology, which included quality criteria and specific quality criteria and a system to assess in terms of performance of organisation. Students are in the main still selecting a system using excellent good and poor, or grading 1 through to 10 marks, which is acceptable. 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 yes and no tick sheet.

The majority of students chose at least two different methods of research and designed appropriate documentation to use. Students stated the quality criteria that they were going to use. In most cases there was no evidence specific aspects of quality criteria being used which is a requirement for the higher mark bands.

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

In the majority of cases the students chose either, a survey or mystery shopper exercise, or in some cases the better students selected at least two of these. Some quality criteria were mentioned and described. In some instances, the students are still referring 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, students must not only give quality criteria but also specific aspects of quality criteria 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.

In some instances, students described in detail quality criteria to be used and then different quality criteria was used in the documentation. Centres should note the two parts of the task must be linked.

An explanation is attempted 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. Students still tend to give a theoretical overview of the advantages and disadvantages of the different methods, 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 student and not the related organisation.

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

In some of the samples the documentation was not included in the work and this therefore limits the work to mark band 1. In other samples the document was found in task D. Centres should note task C and task D are two separate tasks and the document must be presented in task C.

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.

Students 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 were some improvement for some centres in terms of the evaluations produced by the students but on the whole evaluations still tended to be basic and more descriptive and subjective than evaluative. Students did base their discussions on their results.

In some instances, it was found that students 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 student's conclusions, recommendations and findings.

In this series there was good practice shown by some centres in the use of "Trip adviser" and secondary research through the use of their organisations results of past surveys and their own customer reviews on their website. These methods or research helped to support and substantiate and benchmark the students' own findings. In some samples the students only described these results separately and did not link their results to benchmark standards.

Conclusions made at times were straightforward with some recommendations for improvement, but at times these could tend to be more product focused and not customer service focused. Therefore, in some of the work sampled 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.

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

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

To conclude The key requirement is for students 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.

It was clearly evident that some of the students had carried out a vast amount of research. Unfortunately, instead of taking this statistical information and using it throughout their evaluations, they tended to just

describe their interpretation of their results in terms of various diagrams and pie charts, and not carry out an evaluation. This does not address the task.

Additional Evidence

Students 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

On this moderation sample, marking at times was not accurate. 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 students' 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 student's 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 student work. Annotation should focus on the Mark Band descriptors. For example, in task a) annotation could highlight clearly which sector has been selected the different types of customers – the range of customers and the needs accurately produced by the student. In task b) annotation could show where the student 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 b)

Centres are encouraged to annotate throughout the student's work, and should note that ticks are not annotation. Page numbering of students 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 student, or where a student has made 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 to not include the highest or lowest if they have not got an astrix at them.

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

Centres are encouraged not to put students work in plastic pockets as this slows down the moderation process. Work should have presented in an assignment folder or by being secured by treasury tags.

Mark record sheets were included but at times not completed properly, in terms of the student name and number and there were some addition errors with regards to the marks.

Centres should also ensure that the students name and number are also on other parts of the assignment as well as on the record mark sheet.

All evidence should be clearly labelled throughout the work.

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, student's portfolios should include witness testimonies, assessment checklist or observation statement. This should describe student'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 students 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, students showed some knowledge of their chosen sector and the different types of customers however needs, were mainly lists and not exemplified.

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

Students 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 the majority of students chose more than one method of research.

Task D Answers showed a lack of analysis and conclusions and recommendations were mainly straight forward and not matched to benchmark standards.

At times students 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 moderation series, especially with Task A and Task B.