External Assessment Report 2012

Subject(s)	Travel & Tourism
Level(s)	Higher

The statistics used in this report are pre-appeal.

This report provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers/lecturers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding. It would be helpful to read this report in conjunction with the published question papers and marking instructions for the examination.

Comments on candidate performance

General comments

It is very gratifying to report that there has been both an increase in uptake and performance in the Higher Travel & Tourism exam. The total number of candidates presented, were 97, compared to 78 and 79 in 2010–11 respectively. It was also very heartening to see four new centres (all from the secondary sector) presenting candidates, and one returning centre (secondary).

The percentage of candidates achieving Grade A–C showed a dramatic increase in relation to previous years, and the number of candidates gaining a Grade D and No Award the lowest in three years. Comment has to be made here to applaud centres in preparing their students for the exam. In particular, the FE sector has made a significant contribution to reducing the Grade D/No Award by implementing a more rigorous presentation strategy.

Areas in which candidates performed well

The overall standard of answers across the paper was good, and there was a marked improvement in completed answers and marks gained across each section of the exam paper.

Section A

- Q1 and Q2 (the 'Structure' Questions), were answered, on the whole, very well. Of particular note was the improvement in Q1a, as it was recorded in 2010 that the 'definition' questions were answered poorly.

- Q1c i and iii — based on visitor attractions — were answered extremely well.

- Q1d ii (give an example of how the hospitality sector has responded to the growing customer demands for green products/services) was answered a lot better than the first part based on the transport sector.

- Worthy of mention for Q2 were Q2a (explain the term 'integration') and Q2c (horizontal integration).

- The Marketing questions, 3 and 4, were answered very well, apart from Q4b (see the following section). It is evident that many candidates displayed a good understanding of many of the marketing concepts covered at this level.

Section B

- Q5a and b, which focused on mapping, were answered very well. Candidates who attempted Q5 performed better than those who attempted the mapping in Q7.

- Q5d i and ii (describing the strength of Scotland as a conference destination and naming an example with explanation) was answered very well, whereas in 2009 this was not the case.

Section C

Of particular note were:

- Q7b i and ii — mapping the Gulf of Carpentaria and Toronto respectively .
- Q7c i — naming the country that the Calgary Stampede occurs in.
- Q7d iii — naming a main entry airport.
- Q7d iv — naming a visitor attraction (India).
- Q8a iii — naming a gateway airport and time difference between Canada/Australia and the UK.
- Q8a v — naming two named attractions in either Canada or Australia.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Section A

- Q1b i — the role of the BHA.
- Q1b iii — the VisitScotland quality assurance scheme Eat Scotland.
- Q1d i — giving an example of how transport companies have responded to the growing customer demands for green products/services.
- Q4b — identifying a customer care programme on offer in Scotland and explaining its aims.

Section B

- Q5c iii — naming the touring area that hosts ‘T in the Park’.
- Q6 on the whole was not answered well and in particular:

— b part i and ii — Naming a National Trust property in the area of Aberdeenshire and Royal Deeside, and stating why that National Trust property would be suitable.

— b part iv — Naming a food and drink product associated with the area.

— c part ii — As with previous years, many candidates found the itinerary demanding and it was evident there was a lack of knowledge of the Inverness/Wester Ross area. Many candidates deviated from this area in an attempt to include stopovers and attractions.

Section C

- Q7 — candidates found it difficult to identify Tanzania, Bali and the River Rhine from the map. Very few candidates were able to plot Peru on the map.
- Q7c iii — identifying the country for the event Bastille Day.
- Q8b ii — identifying two attractions in Hawaii and Hong Kong. Many candidates were able only to identify one of each.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

General

It is worth stating that centres are obviously delivering a high standard of teaching, giving candidates the necessary skills and knowledge required for passing the exam. This is reflected in the increase in Grade 'A' passes, where more academically able candidates are enjoying much success. There are areas, however, that require attention to further improve the attainment of future candidates, which are not as academic.

It is also worth stressing that some of these areas have been highlighted in previous External Assessment Reports.

Section A

- Once again, industry organisations, eg BHA have proved difficult to answer along with questions relating to VisitScotland.

- Similarly, trends in tourism (eg green issues) and up-to-date industry practice (eg customer care programmes) highlight the need for centres to update their resources.

- It is worth noting that, although the Chain of Distribution questions, 2e and 2f, would not be flagged as 'too demanding', candidates' responses suggests there is a clear case that improvement in this area of teaching is required, especially since either this question or one based around the 'structure' diagram has made an appearance since the exam's inception.

Section B

- Candidates inability to recall and/or lack of preparation has meant that questions that revolve around aspects of the Scottish Tourism Product have been answered poorly (ie Q6). Producing a 'folio' for each tourist region, along with completing numerous itineraries to cover the necessary areas of Scotland, may go some way to improving attainment for this aspect of the exam

Section C

- On the whole Q7 and 8 were answered better than in previous years, but candidates scored lower in section C than section B. In addition, very few candidates answered on Ecuador for Q7d and Canada for Q8a. Similarly to section B, candidates would benefit from practice itineraries.

Centres are reminded that it is prudent to use past papers and marking schemes to improve candidates preparation for the external examination.

Once again some centres submitted estimates that were generous. Centres are reminded about ensuring that candidates are presented at the appropriate level.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2011	78

Number of resulted entries in 2012	97

Statistical information: Performance of candidates

Distribution of Course awards including grade boundaries

Distribution of Course awards	%	Cum. %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum Mark 100				
A	18.6%	18.6%	18	70
B	15.5%	34.0%	15	60
C	36.1%	70.1%	35	50
D	7.2%	77.3%	7	45
No award	22.7%	100.0%	22	-

General commentary on grade boundaries

- While SQA aims to set examinations and create marking instructions which will allow a competent candidate to score a minimum of 50% of the available marks (the notional C boundary) and a well prepared, very competent candidate to score at least 70% of the available marks (the notional A boundary), it is very challenging to get the standard on target every year, in every subject at every level.

- Each year SQA therefore holds a grade boundary meeting for each subject at each level where it brings together all the information available (statistical and judgemental). The Principal Assessor and SQA Qualifications Manager meet with the relevant SQA Business Manager and Statistician to discuss the evidence and make decisions. The meetings are chaired by members of the management team at SQA.

- The grade boundaries can be adjusted downwards if there is evidence that the exam is more challenging than usual, allowing the pass rate to be unaffected by this circumstance.

- The grade boundaries can be adjusted upwards if there is evidence that the exam is less challenging than usual, allowing the pass rate to be unaffected by this circumstance.

- Where standards are comparable to previous years, similar grade boundaries are maintained.

- An exam paper at a particular level in a subject in one year tends to have a marginally different set of grade boundaries from exam papers in that subject at that level in other years. This is because the particular questions, and the mix of questions, are different. This is also the case for exams set in centres. If SQA has already altered a boundary in a particular year in, say, Higher Chemistry this does not mean that centres should necessarily alter boundaries in their prelim exam in Higher Chemistry. The two are not that closely related as they do not contain identical questions.

- SQA's main aim is to be fair to candidates across all subjects and all levels and maintain comparable standards across the years, even as arrangements evolve and change.