Version 2.0 0211

General Certificate of Education (A-level) Applied
January 2011

Leisure Studies LS02

(Specification 8641/8643/8646/8647/8649)

Unit 2: A People Business

Report on the Examination

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General Comments

From the evidence provided in sampled scripts, centres are preparing candidates for this paper by undertaking quality, in depth, investigations of at least two leisure organisations.

A general observation of the standard of responses indicates that the quality of the final task in many cases is not as high as the other three. This may be improved if the schedule for sitting the papers can be spread over the whole of the two week period. Additional encouragement and a reminder, especially to weaker candidates, of the importance of putting 100% effort into all tasks may avoid some of the ‘tail off’ and possibly positively affect the final result.

What was particularly good

Candidates have used information gained from their practical experiences within the leisure industry, including visits, speakers and work experiences, to enrich their responses with a range of relevant examples when requested in the tasks.

There have been fewer examples this year of candidates misinterpreting questions and simply writing ‘all they know’ about the subject of the question.

Good candidates have produced well structured (planned) responses to questions, identifying and addressing all aspects required.

Where centres have prepared a model response, which has then been followed by the whole cohort, the higher marks have been frequently gained when candidates have used their own initiative and personal experience or original ideas to deviate from the ‘agreed model’.

What was not so good

Where a model answer has been produced by groups during the preparation period, it is noticeable that the weaker candidates often try to incorporate elements of the information discussed. However, they demonstrate little understanding of the content and produce disjointed answers which gain few marks.

There is still evidence of candidates either being guided into producing an incorrect response to a question, or not being advised against an inappropriate response during the preparation period, which has on occasion resulted in whole cohorts answering particular questions poorly.

Legibility of scripts still remains a problem with some candidates; it is not just the weaker candidates who may be losing marks because examiners are unable to decipher often crucial words or phrases.

It can never be stressed too much that candidates must ‘answer the question’. Some very good candidates have written pages in response to a question without actually addressing the requirements of the question.

Assignment Task A

Question **01** asked candidates to consider two ways ‘design planning’ anticipates and meets customer needs, so limiting dissatisfaction. Many candidates concentrated on aspects of access, specifically for disabled people. The design of the reception area and the design of particular facilities within an organisation, such as the swimming pool, were often used as topics and covered quite well. In good answers, candidates developed ideas, explaining how lighting, décor and signage are designed to a produce positive ambience for customers visiting the organisation.

Weaker answers either described the general design of a ‘whole’ facility, with little or no mention of customer needs, or described where and why a facility had been designed and built in a particular location.

For question **02**, there were some very good Level 3 answers produced by candidates who used their experience or research into automated telephone systems to discuss the strengths and weaknesses for both the organisation and the customers.

Weaker candidates demonstrated little understanding of the functions of automated answering systems and used their limited knowledge to offer basic responses. For example, some candidates described a simple system of putting customers 'on hold' and described the effects long waiting time had on customers.

It appears that some candidates considered the contents of a past paper question as the basis of their discussion. However, these answers simply described in general terms the situation identified in the question paper.

Assignment Task B

Question **03** was answered quite well, though many candidates tended to describe the range of good customer services offered by the organisation, rather than explain which area of their customer services gave them the competitive edge.

Mid range responses described some of the areas of good customer services; they tended to explain how the organisation's facilities/products gave them a competitive edge over other organisations.

Weaker answers made very little or no reference to a competitive edge, but went off at a tangent, and explained other benefits of offering good customer services, e.g. increased customer numbers and repeat visits etc.

Question **04** was not always well answered. Only a small proportion of candidates clearly compared how good customer procedures in the two leisure organisations lead to the development of a well motivated and efficient workforce. These candidates produced well composed and balanced answers, and achieved marks in the Level 3 band.

The majority of candidates explained how training, teamwork, and building relationships with customers lead to being valued for their efforts which motivated them into continuing to deliver good services to the customers.

Weaker answers concentrated on how staff can be motivated to deliver good customer services and, although they may have touched on some of the issues mentioned above, they put more emphasis on the various rewards and incentives that could be used.

Assignment Task C

For question **05**, the term 'exit survey' was interpreted in many different ways.

There were some very good, detailed answers which allowed candidates to achieve full marks. Four questions were offered and their selection justified on the basis of what information/data may be collected. Candidates then explained how the information gained could be used to help the organisation develop plans to maintain or improve customer service standards. The better answers came from centres where candidates had not been 'over guided' into the type of questions to ask.

Where centres had prepared model questions, a range of middle marks was generally achieved, however the weaker candidates found it more difficult to justify the value of the questions and what information might be gained.

Weak candidates offered four questions, some of little value in gaining any useful data, and reasoning for their selection was limited.

In question **06**, which explores different methods of evaluating standards of customer services, it was quite disappointing to note that many candidates could not demonstrate an understanding of what a focus group was and how it can be used to help plan future customer service.

In other cases, candidates showed a clear understanding of the term focus group and explained, with examples, how they can be used to the advantage of the organisation. Good answers started with a brief description of the structure and purpose of the group and then highlighted the advantages of using them.

Weaker answers showed little understanding of focus groups and tended to describe staff meetings which 'focused' on improving customer services. Weaker candidates, who did try to explain what a focus group was, tended to get confused as to its structure and did not offer any explanation how the organisation might benefit from using one.

Assignment Task D

Question **07** was possibly the most accessible question on this paper, as most candidates were able to identify, and briefly describe, a range of skills needed to deliver good customer services. The stronger candidates explained clearly why these skills were needed to successfully interact with customers and supported their reasoning with examples.

Weaker answers tended to describe a combination of skills and personal qualities, but were limited in both their range and clarity.

Question **08** offered candidates the opportunity to put themselves in the place of the manager and apply their understanding of how they should act to cater for all their staff and customers so that, at the end of the day, they would all go home happy with their experience. However, considering the amount of information given in the text, answers were generally a little disappointing.

There were some good answers where candidates had addressed most of the issues, offered practical solutions which would have headed off possible complaints and at the same time benefited the museum.

Candidates attained the mid level marks by considering the issues and making basic suggestions that may have alleviated the situation slightly. Weaker candidates did not study the text sufficiently and therefore made unrealistic suggestions given the complexity of the event and the timescale involved.

Where responses to this question had been pre-planned as a group activity, answers rarely achieved Level 3.

Suggestions for teachers to prepare future candidates

Suggestions should be considered along with notes from previous records.

It is advisable that teachers should select a minimum of two organisations of similar size and complexity for their investigations. The bigger the organisation the greater the scope candidates should have to research the range of issues/practices which appear in the course specification.

When preparing for the examination, candidates should be reminded of the question tariffs, and plan their timing and efforts accordingly.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the Results statistics page of the AQA Website.