



ICS Examiners Report

Port Agency

Overall Comments Guidelines

The overall standard for the Port Agency examination in November 2023 was reasonably high, and a slight improvement on the May examination earlier in the year. There was a significant improvement particularly with the laytime question, where an increased number of students achieved full marks for the question. There was also a noticeable improvement in maritime geography. The multi part questions and cash flow questions were where students fared less well.

Overall Comments

The questions were selected from within the port agency syllabus. Questions were set on disbursements, abbreviations, multi part operational questions, laytime, marketing, cash flow, husbandry services, maritime geography and trade routes.

Question one- Ships Disbursements

Generally this question was well handled, however a large number of students failed to supply the disbursement accounts as the question requested, despite displaying awareness and knowledge many students lost marks due to this issue. The majority of students who attempted this question and were able to create the four disbursement accounts tended to receive high marks.

Question Two: Abbreviations

The question on general maritime abbreviations relating to the port agent was very well handled and most students who attempted this question tended to achieve reasonable to high pass marks. The only negative aspect of this question was that the question specifically requested that the students offer examples within their answer, but this was unfortunately ignored in most cases and affected marks awarded accordingly.

Question Three Marketing- Multi Part Operational Question

The students struggled with this question, in effect it was a three part question. Challenging the students knowledge on (a) The concept of the charterers agent (b) Operational options which the student needed to present to the client to resolve the situation (c) The likelihood of additional costs, claims and the port agents requirement to protect their interest by introducing their PI club into the problem at an early stage. Students struggled to gain marks across all three sections of the question.

Question Four Laytime

A definitive improvement in the laytime question in this exam session. A noticeably higher proportion of students managed to achieve full marks. The majority of students managed to supply high quality laytime statements, which even where students were not being able to achieve full marks, were able to achieve a reasonable mark due to the amount of detail included in the laytime statements.

Question Five- Marketing

The marketing question was generally well handled, although again students struggled with the concept of this being a multi part question. Students were expected to create a formal response, advise historical company information and operational information, and then suggest any relevant added value services.

Many students managed to answer parts of the question, but few students were able to achieve high marks.

Question Six – Cash flow

This question was only modestly handled by students as a number of students completely overlooked the main factors associated with improving cash flow which were ensuring advance funds were in place, and careful management of the debtors and creditor relationships.

Many students confused profitability with cash flow and created detailed answers on increasing marketing efforts and market share, leading to additional income and turnover. This has some benefits, but it is not the main techniques required.

Question Seven- Trades and Trade Routes

This was a question that was very well handled by students. Most students chose to discuss iron ore, and the majority were able to offer good examples of appropriate load and discharge ports and were able to accurately display them on the map. The standard of vessel diagrams was of a high standard and most were supported with a detailed range of tonnages.

Question Eight Husbandry services

This was a new question asking the student to focus on the provision of husbandry services, which is in itself an important market sector within the range of ships agency services.

Most students were able to give detailed answers covering the main range of service offerings including cash to master, crew changes, medical services, via services, spare parts supply, calls services and bunkering.