

Examiner's Report NOVEMBER 2015

Ship Operations and Management

General comments

Candidates should attempt FIVE questions and allocate sufficient time for this. Candidates are reminded that they are taking an exam and should take with them more than a single pen. A ruler, a pencil, eraser and spare pens are normally essential for a well presented paper. ALL candidates should look at previous exam papers and the previous examiners reports as otherwise they will be prone to making common mistakes.

Overall comments.

Most candidates made a reasonable attempt at the paper and demonstrated a fair knowledge of the subject. Some may not have properly read the paper, while some other students wrote down what they knew about the subject regardless of what was asked for. Most candidates attempted five questions but not all answered the questions asked.

Shipping is an international business and a reasonable knowledge of geography is required in the exam, particularly when using maps. In particular you should know East from West, that Brazil is in South America and that there are few ports situated far inland. Vague arrows showing a voyage heading from the South Atlantic to the Indian Ocean over Africa to illustrate a trade route will not gain marks.

The graph paper in the booklet is best used with a calculation, drawing or graph. The examiners do not penalise students for lapses in grammar or spelling but they must be able to read your answer so reasonable handwriting will help us award you marks.

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Question 1

Vessel characteristics

This was the most popular question and one which was generally answered quite well. Some candidates took time to draw a vessel using a pencil and ruler and were rewarded with extra marks but many still made their drawing using neither and often these were too small and lacked detail.

All candidates should be familiar with the arrangement of the bow and stern of a vessel as these are common to most.

Many made little effort to name the parts of the vessel which really should be known.

It is necessary to list the characteristics of the vessel and many opted for a handysize bulker. Students should demonstrate knowledge of the typical length, beam, summer dwt and draft of the vessel together with the cubic capacity and GRT.

Most drawings of tankers were good but most of containerships did not show details. Several students spent time giving details of all the trades where their chosen vessel might be employed when only **one** was asked for. The time would be better used by improving drawing skills and a description of the vessel in much greater detail, the equipment on board, special features, gear etc. The use of maps was good but naming ports on the chosen trade and placing them accurately on the map together with features on the route will gain marks.

Question 2

Flag of Convenience

This was a reasonably popular question and quite well done particularly with regard to the advantages and disadvantages of flagging out. However there was considerable confusion over Certificates and all students should be clear on which are issued by Flag, which by Class and which by Class or other organisation under the authority of Flag.

It is not necessary to write a page or more on the historical beginnings of the Liberian or Panamanian flags unless asked to do so.

Question 3

There were several very good and well informed answers in what was a popular question possibly from students already working in the industry.

The drawing of an organisation chart should be attempted as it will help in remembering the different departments in a management organisation and indicate knowledge of the different roles undertaken and where the DPA and CSO fit into the structure. Several candidates mentioned the Shipman contract and also gave some good answers on an arrest "in rem" but it must be remembered that this is not a Law exam, a long thesis on the intricacies of the law should be saved for the appropriate place.

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Question 4

Voyage Calculation

Not a popular question but those who attempted it and who demonstrated a basic understanding of how to work out a voyage estimate earned marks even if mistakes were made in the calculations. Remember you are taking an exam, in real life you would allow extra days and fuel for a voyage estimate, and a statement saying you would do this is fine, **but not in an exam.**

Some student did not identify that Galveston is in the US and the US is in a SECA and that fuel used must be LSGasoil. Others mistook the Sulphur content of 0.1% for the amount of fuel used when burning it.

Students should know about stowage factors (SF), that the grain cubic capacity of the vessel divided by this will determine the maximum cargo that physically could be loaded. Some worked this out but then did not calculate that the vessel had spare deadweight capacity of over 2,500 MT sufficient for plenty of bunkers and constant without affecting the cargo quantity. Deadweight is what is put on the vessel and includes cargo, bunkers, water constant etc. Voyage costs should only take into account **the fuels used on the voyage**, not all the bunkers taken during the voyage and that fuel should be used **FIFO** i.e. all the appropriate fuel already on board should be used first followed by the balance of any new fuel as necessary. In an exam you should **use the safety margin given, not add your own in time or fuel.** You should also be accurate, strictly limit your rounding up as it can make a large difference in the answer. Students should try to lay out the calculation in a simple and clear format. This will allow the examiner to award marks for having the right method and find where a hurried mistake might have been made in calculation. Having worked out the answers, show these **clearly** so the examiner can find them.

Question 5

Costs

Fixed costs are the costs of acquiring a vessel, all of them should be listed, and not just the purchase price however it was paid. Students were asked to explain the difference between operating and voyage costs but some merely listed them without doing so, thereby missing out part of the question. If you are asked to apportion a list of costs, list them under the headings you were given, not mentioning owners, charterers, operators or other headings.

This was another popular choice as always with some high scores helped by the last part of question and generally was quite well done.

Question 6

Crewing/Manning

All parts of this question carried similar marks. So answering that the reason why your company employs mixed crews is purely based on costs and then moving on to the next part is unlikely to satisfy the examiner that this is enough.

Knowledge of STCW and other associated matters will help you to answer the second part but stick to the question that is asked, this is about crewing and not about ISM as several candidates seemed to think. There were a lot of

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good answers in what was a fairly popular question and for many it was high marks for a full answer that made the difference to their overall result.

Question 7

Bunkers

Students must be aware of the bunker legislation of Marpol but also the EU regulations which have been in force for longer. They should also be specific about the limits and the ISO standards that apply. En route means on the route of the voyage which was from Nigeria to Rotterdam, therefore Singapore, Fujairah and Cape Town are not suitable. Remember that a large deviation to take bunkers is only justified if the savings are large enough to outweigh the costs in time and extra fuel that come as a consequence.

Some students were familiar with the best way to get suitable bunkers but they should be known by all students. This was not a popular question, which is a pity as bunkers are an important cost item for all vessels and recent changes in the legislation come thick and fast.

Question 8

The least popular question but one that should not have presented many problems, as it did not ask for a decision to be made on the route, only what factors to take into account before making one. All the routes were of similar distance so all were viable alternatives but some students made assumptions about going by Panama because they believed it was shortest. It is not, and some went further choosing to go via the Suez Canal mistaking Cape Horn for the Horn of Africa.

Making a decision meant some candidates then ignored the alternatives but fundamentally one must consider all the factors.

- Are they allowed in the c/p terms, what does it say about the quantity?
- Can you load this maximising the cargo on your panamax and get through the canal which is draft restricted and are there any draft restrictions at the load or disport?
- What are the additional costs of either canal, who pays these, what has been agreed?
- Where can you bunker en route or will you maximise at the load port if the vessel cubes out with deadweight to spare?
- What will the weather be like en route? Remember it is now late summer in the Southern Hemisphere and the weather will be reasonable. Weather routeing is a resource but it is not the only one, you should know about the others.