SOM Examiners Report Nov 2023

General comments.

By reading past reports a candidate can have some familiarity with the exam and what is required to pass it. Read the question and don't answer what you are not asked for, you don't lose marks; they just don't get them. Wasting time answering extra questions degrades your performance of the five you should do. If a question has four parts, then answer each part as fully as possible. If you are told to use the world map to support your answer then do this properly to get the marks for this.
You must be well prepared for any examination and where you know that you might be asked to do a calculation and a drawing that means having a calculator, pencils, an erasure and a ruler. It also helps the examiner to give you marks if your writing is legible so practise doing this. Make your answers **clear and easy to find** where applicable.

Candidates must demonstrate a reasonable understanding of maritime geography. Shipping has always been a worldwide business and a good knowledge of that world is essential. A map should always show relevant **ports, routes and geographical features on that route such as canals, capes, seas, oceans, and special areas affected by weather, currents or hazards or restrictions.** Do not waste time naming irrelevant details such as distant seas and countries, as these get no extra marks.

Q1. Drawing

Always the most popular question in this exam some candidates showed real knowledge and all those who passed generally got good marks in this question. Only draw a profile and cross section, you are not asked for a plan. Several drawings were too small and therefore could not show much detail and very few showed any evidence of study of a General Arrangement document. Candidates should show familiarity with the important areas of the vessel such as the bow and stern arrangement, and the important safety features. This question will come up in a number of exams, practice drawing so you become proficient as a good well annotated drawing showing knowledge will get high marks. The characteristics of the vessel are also asked for and it is not sufficient merely just to give the dwt, draught, loa, beam, gear and engine power. These should be accurate and backed up with some description of the vessel that shows the examiner you are familiar with this type.
Many candidates saved their best efforts for the description of the trade. Remember there are four parts to this question and in principle all parts carry equal marks. Use a map for this part, mark the route, load and discharge ports on the map and show some knowledge of the route as advised in the General Remarks.

Q2. ISM
This was a two-part question with part (a) being the role and responsibilities of the DPA and the proper implementation of ISM in the safe operation of each vessel. This part was quite well done but there was a reluctance by some to show any wider role than to be the contact and link between senior management and the vessel in time of trouble and carry out ship visits. Some went into more details and got more marks for explaining that the DPA must ensure management properly supports and resources their role to ensure safety at sea and avoid environmental damage. Using their operational knowledge, they will implement the SMS throughout the company and audit its performance with visits and inspections and revise the SMS as appropriate to make it a living document.
Part (b) asked for **the specific certificates and documents a vessel must carry to show compliance with ISM**. Ships have to carry a lot of documents but the ones that show compliance with the ISM code are quite specific starting with the SMC and the DOC and accompanied by the CSR, the Record of Audits, the Record of non-conformities and the details of the Crew and Officers training. Those

who wrote about these with good details of the validity, issuing body and significance of each got good marks.
Remember the DOC is for the Safety Management System and given to the office for each type of vessel, tanker, container etc. The SMC is for the ship a Certificate to show that this vessel operates the system.
Several decided that a whole host of other documents were specific such as the Cert of Class, the Load Line and the three Safety certificates, Construction, Equipment and Radio. These are fundamental for the existence of the ship but do not signify compliance with the SMS. In previous Examiners report I have written all of this before, read them and learn.

Q3 Costs.
As ever a popular question and this was generally done quite well but it is important to carefully read the question and answer all the parts. Part (a) asked the candidate to explain the difference between the three main costs and several answered this correctly but some relied on using examples as their answer which was not so successful. Parts (b) and (c) were done with varying success depending on the candidates understanding of the words describe as fully as possible in both of these and there were some good answers. Part (d) was the most popular and the source of the most marks but there is still come confusion about some of these. Light dues are a Voyage cost but can also be an Operational cost for a vessel on a regular run into a light dues port. War Risk Insurance is an Operating cost as it has to be paid anyway. A Draft survey is normally a Voyage cost as it is part of the Voyage as is an On Hire Survey for a spot charter. A new Gyro system is a Fixed Cost as it improves the asset value.

Q4 Fuels.
While the spotlight is on advancing Global emissions regulation and the maritime response a question on the subject should have been expected. Surprisingly that this was not a popular question seems incomprehensible. The rules have been in place for OVER 15 YEARS in some areas and should be completely familiar to all candidates taking the exams.
The first part of the question was about the permissible levels of Sulphur emissions Only two levels of Sulphur emissions are permitted worldwide, 0.1%S and 0.5%S.
The former 0.1% s is MANDATORY in the Baltic, the North Sea and English Channel, ALL EU ports from Norway including several Norwegian fjords, down and into the Mediterranean to the Black Sea including Turkey and ports and waters of Iceland and Israel. The whole of the rest of the Mediterranean will join this group in 2024 and be compliant by May 2025.
The North American coasts out to a distance of 200 NM where possible and around Islands that are US territories and States outside of North America. They also now apply to the ports in South Korea and the Chinese river ports on the Yangtze and Xi Jiang rivers and around Hainan Island.
For the rest of the world's Oceans, Seas, Waterways and Ports the limit is **0.5%S.**
The second part asked for one popular bunkering location in the major shipping areas of the world together with five reasons why these ports became so successful. This should have been easy and there were a lot to choose from and generally this part was done quite well.
But candidates were told to use the map to support their answer. It seems that some offices struggle with questions that require even a limited knowledge of Maritime Geography so those were at a disadvantage. It must be stressed that Shipping is an international industry and anyone working in this industry must be reasonably acquainted with the major countries, ports and waterways of this world. Three questions in this paper required the candidate to show this knowledge so a number of marks up to about 12 were available. This knowledge was the difference in some cases between success and failure.

Q5. Calculation.

Not a popular question but one that was in fact done well by most of those candidates who did this. It was a relatively simple calculation to find the max cargo the vessel could load as the vessel cubed out with over 5000 MT of spare deadweight and the cargo was within the charter quantity. With the vessel completing at Brisbane the choice of bunker port was between Brisbane and Adelaide as there was insufficient fuel to reach Kawasaki and the price there was the same as Adelaide. But Brisbane is cheaper by $20 pMT and the fuel needed for the voyage and ROB at Kawasaki was 930 MT. With a margin of $20pMT that is a saving of $18,600 and as the extra time and fuel used bunkering was for 12 hours that cost was only $5,470 so Brisbane was the obvious choice. This extra cost was actually incurred in the previous voyage that finished on departure Brisbane but candidates who either did or did not apportion this cost or a part of this cost to the current voyage were marked as correct. This in turn made a small difference to the daily net profit but this was fairly marked where shown. Beware of rounding up days in an exam. This is common in everyday life but in an exam calculation it makes for quite large differences. Round up a little at the end of the calculation when arriving at a total. Show your working and make your answers clear. Don't forget SSHEX or FIFO .There are still candidates apportioning all the bunkers purchased during the voyage to the costs of this voyage! They are making a major error and lose marks. Yet several candidates in the cost question were quick to show that the bunkers USED were a voyage cost. Learning these costs does not always mean understanding them.

Q6. Cargo

This was a four-part question to be and should have a four-part answer supported by a map. It is important to identify firstly the information needed by any ship proceeding to a load port for a cargo which would be the port and its restrictions and equipment, the cargo and its specific requirements, the quantity for the CP and the laycan and etas together with the agents. That this cargo is grain should then trigger a response that takes into account, cleaning, the grain book, stability, bilge checks, hatch cover tests, fumigation and other surveys and inspections. All of this is prior to loading, much of it before even berthing.
During loading the stowage and stability should be checked. De-ballasting should be completed and the cargo properly trimmed and the holds filled into the coamings being aware of load line restrictions at the disport. At all times keep a close check on the weather and monitor the moorings. On completion some form of fumigation may be needed and a draft survey should be carried out.
On the loaded passage to Hamburg the vessel will pass from summer in Argentina to winter in North Europe with a change of temperature from 30 deg C to around zero. Ventilation will likely be needed, after checking with Charterers, preferably at the start of the voyage before the vessel gets into the colder weather north of the equator and the Tropic of Cancer to avoid cargo sweat. Hold temperature and bilges should be checked on a regular basis.
Weather and climate on the early part of the voyage should be mild and warm/hot with SE winds and a slight adverse current but as the vessel goes north the temperatures will fall, the wind will turn to NE as will the current, both against the vessel. After about 30 deg N Latitude the weather will start to deteriorate with increasing SW winds sea and swell as the vessel approaches northern Europe. Visibility may be affected by local Fog.

Q7. Crews.
The question was straightforward but required a wider answer than some candidates would consider. Several concentrated on the STCW convention which are part of the regulations to ensure that ships are manned by employees with the requisite experience, training and health requirements. This is of course important and can be looked at as a regulatory "stick" to try to ensure this. But others also looked at the bigger picture and were rewarded appropriately. The crew of a ship should be considered as individual employees in any industry. Their requirements are the same as those individuals. Companies need employees and in order to recruit them and retain them

the rarely use a stick. They normally offer a carrot of good wages and other inducements such as holiday pay, a pension, sickness benefit and even more at a senior level. In return they expect employee loyalty and hard work. If employees do not get these then they go elsewhere. This situation is magnified in shipping where an individual's employment is much more onerous with long hours, hard work, separation from home and family and enforced isolation. It is therefore prudent for a shipping company to be offer an even better package of benefits. Candidates for this exam hope perhaps to work in the Maritime sector. What will attract you to this employment?

Q8. Incident

Another four-part question which while not a popular choice gave candidates the chance to show common sense in a difficult situation, some knowledge of ships, their familiarity with ship operations and their understanding of the marine insurance world. Overall while there were some good papers in general the candidates did not fully grasp the opportunity this presented. While most centres showed some attention to the injured some showed little concern while one centre seemed obsessed with dealing with them almost to the exclusion of any other matter. In fact for at least for one candidate it was their sole concern in all four parts of the question!

In previous examiners reports I have highlighted that in this kind of situation the safety of the SHIP is the primary concern. Yes, attend to the injured but as part of the overall response to ensure that the ship is safe and secure while identifying the extent of the damage and recording the incident. Once this is done advise your management probably through the DPA to arrange for their help to contact all the interested parties in varying order of importance. In doing this you can show your knowledge of operations. Contact with the shore will also be important to alert the resources of the Port authorities and your agent. The main types of insurance and their cover should be familiar to you and some mention of General Average might be relevant.