



# 2014 ICS Examiner's Report

## PORT AGENCY (PA)

### **Overall Comments**

Generally the standard for the Port Agency exam was reasonable for this year. Concerns were raised regarding the lack of knowledge displayed in geography and the financial aspects of ships agency. There were far fewer papers which produced exceptionally low marks. There used to be significant numbers of low-scorers in previous years. But there was also a lack of papers which achieved exceptionally high marks also.

A reasonable standard for 2014, but there is some concern in the responses from students particularly with regard to Maritime Geography. Here the standard of knowledge displayed was exceptionally poor. Yet again students also struggled with any multi-part questions. The general knowledge displayed on the laytime statement has improved through the years. Students still appear to be reluctant to undertake questions which relate to the financial aspects of ships agency.

The questions were selected from within the syllabus for the subject and sought to challenge the student's knowledge on a number of diverse topics within the scope of ships agency. These include laytime, marketing, finance, operational situations and bills of lading.

### **Question 1**

Generally the vessel sketches were reasonable, but in many cases poor. Limited amounts of information were supplied in respect of the vessel's dimensions and tonnages. The most disappointing aspect was the often very poor quality of maritime geography supplied by the students. Felixstowe was situated in Norway, Yokohama in South America. Amsterdam was a coastal port in the Cameroons and the major Greek port of Pireaus was located in Northern Canada. These were some of the more glaring errors.

### **Question 2**

A very popular question, and it created a reasonable standard of answer. There was some confusion with the definition of a hub agent. Certain agents were unaware of the terms and answered it from the perspective of a container hub port. Also noted was some confusion over the role of an agent of necessity.

### **Question 3**

This question was reasonably well-answered where students displayed a solid grasp of the liability which applies to ships agents. However, students struggled to take this forward and fully explain the consequences for the ships agent should they not utilise the *As agents only* defence. Some mention of P&I insurance would also have been expected.

**Question 4**

Students tended to answer the basic agency aspect of this question well. Higher marks were given to those giving details of their service levels, with details of staffing, qualifications, relevant experience in the grain market and added value services. Where some students struggled with this question was that they overlooked the important aspect that the question required; that is to be specifically aligned to the grain markets.

**Question 5**

Generally well-answered, students seemed to be able to grasp the fundamental nature of the question being asked, and were able to produce a relevant laytime statement. Some students still failed to negotiate some of the laytime stoppages. However the marking scheme has, over the years, improved so as to recognise where students may have made only a nominal error in the question.

**Question 6**

Some students struggled to understand the requirement of this question. They should have reviewed port costs and identified and defined the specific costs that could then be negotiated. They should then have described how this could be achieved. Unfortunately some of the students struggled with the two-part aspect of this question.

**Question 7**

Students tended to focus on writing in too much depth on the three main roles of the bill of lading. Although this was not incorrect, it meant that the students failed to offer practical solutions to the actual problem at hand.

Those that did score reasonably well and could offer options such as letters of indemnity and mate's receipt, which although having several flaws, displayed a pro-active approach to solving the problem.

**Question 8**

This was a new question in the exam this year. It was relatively well handled by those students who attempted the question. The added-value part of the question was less well-answered. But as this is a niche aspect of the ships agency market, it is understandable that there was a lack of actual experience that may have come through in the answer.