

SOM Examiners report May 2024

General

It is fundamental, when taking the exam, to read the question carefully and then answer it. Some candidates still fail to do this. It is also important to answer all parts of the question so a question with three parts requires three answers. Knowing that the exam might require drawing and illustrating a map, be prepared with pencils, a ruler eraser etc.

Read the instructions, you must only answer five 5 questions. Attempting eight 8, does not improve your chances, it weakens them as you waste valuable time and the examiner will only mark the first 5 in the answer booklet. Concentrate on doing your best five and if you start one and then realise you cannot continue make sure you clearly cross out what you have done so it is clear to the examiner.

Looking back at the past Examiners Reports on the ICS website is your best chance to gain familiarity with the exam and what is required to pass it.

Candidates must demonstrate a reasonable understanding and knowledge 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. All of these, relevant to the voyage show your knowledge. Do not waste time naming irrelevant details such as distant seas and countries as these get no extra marks.

Q1. As usual the most popular question in the exam with real opportunities for getting high marks by showing your knowledge of the layout of the majority of commercial vessels be they Dry Bulk, Tankers or Container vessels. As usual candidates were asked to draw a profile (side view) and cross section (front view) of a vessel. Some lost precious time drawing a plan (a bird's eye view) that was not required or given marks. When drawing a profile turn the paper to a landscape view and use the full length to allow more detail. Several drawings were too small, lacking details, limiting labelling and missing marks. It is important to show your knowledge of the layout of the fo'castle area as this and the stern arrangement are common to most vessels. You can do this by a short list of the equipment to be found there. You do not get marks for saving paper, in fact it makes it difficult to give them.

Examiners want to see accuracy with the dimensions you give to the vessels. A Kamsarmax vessel is a large Panamax with beam of 32.3M and a length of 229M, slightly larger than a typical Panamax but a greater depth and draft. The vessel operates in the Panamax trades but if not using the old locks loaded can load a greater SDWT of around 80-85 KMT. Its max length of 229M is the LOA restriction at Port Kamsar (a major Bauxite loading port) and this is one of its trades.

It is the same with Aframax tankers. They all have similar dimensions LOA 240 M, beam 42-44 M and draft 13.5-14 M. Its SDWT will be around 100-120 KMT with a cubic cap of about 130 KM³ (750kbbbls). These vessels can be in the clean trades especially from the AG to Japan and Korea. But many will trade dirty and on shorter haul routes with Crude. Those who chose the ultra large Container vessels often showed good specialised knowledge of these and drawing skills.

With four parts to the question all parts carry similar marks. Some of those for part (d) are allocated to the map so make sure you do this properly and keep in mind that the actual description of the trade will only be worth about 2-3 marks at best.

If you are going to learn a route ensure that the one you choose is appropriate for the vessel, cargo and ports concerned and be VERY SURE you show this in detail using the map.

Q2. Not a popular question but most who did attempt it did quite well and there were a few who showed real knowledge. Some students merely wrote what they knew about ISPS but some answered part (a) by looking at the validity of the statement and deciding that it was true but that vessels also gained better security in the longer term. Part (b) was done quite well with candidates showing familiarity with the various acronyms, RSOs, SSPs, ISSCs, and protection for the vessel from new systems, and anti-piracy measures. Many showed familiarity with the reporting requirements, audits and surveys together with record keeping and different security states.

Q3. This was quite a popular question which is not surprising as it was very straightforward for candidates who had practiced doing an actual voyage calculation. You should also develop a simple calculation format in table format which shows each part of the voyage, ballast passages, load, loaded passages and discharge as well as any delays together with distances and port times as appropriate and fuel consumptions. This makes it easy to see the usage, the days used and the totals at the end. This means that determining the cost of the bunkers used in total is simple using FIFO. There were some very good answers with several getting full marks and candidates who made simple mistakes in calculations only lost marks for this, and were not penalised later in the question.

This is a relatively simple cargo question really to test if a candidate knows what to do. Given the cubic capacity was 70,545 M³ and SF 1.39 the max cargo will be **50751.8 MT** (50,752 MT) which will cube out the vessel. It should be obvious that with a SDWT of 57,884 MT the vessel will have about 7,000 MT of spare DWT so the fuel and constant will not affect the cargo and Candidates who mentioned this and that this figure also met the CP requirement of 50 KMT +/- 10% i.e. MT got full marks for this part. Those who ignored this and worked out the DWCC without any reference to the cubic did not. Candidates must be aware of SSHEX & SHINC and be familiar with using these. Your choice for bunkering was relatively straightforward. The vessel needed to take sufficient bunkers during the voyage to replace all that was used on the voyage, plus the required increase in the ROB. As was made clear in the question a careful calculation of the different voyage legs ballast/ load/ laden/ discharge correctly using SSHINC and SSHEX and the right speed should have shown that the bunkers **used** on the voyage were 938MT LSFO 0.5%S & 55MT LSGO 0.1%S. Kobe is a port in Japan which is still using LSFO 0.5%S. The bunkers required then to meet this were 1098 MT LSFO 0.5%S, and 155MT LSGO 0.1%. Bunkers at Cartagena were no benefit. **Galveston** prices are \$1 more per tonne than Panama but the extra costs at the latter meant the former was far better so take all the bunkers there. Candidates who showed they were familiar with the calculation process gained marks even when an earlier error would prevent a correct answer.

Q4. Read the question, this is not about the different types of costs. This was a budget question. It is designed for you to show what information you would need about an unknown vessel so that you are able to create a budget for the one that has just been purchased by one of your owners with a mixed fleet. Briefly, these are Size, Age, Type, Flag, Engine and Auxiliaries, Handling Equipment and Trading area because with these you will be able to determine from your company's experience the likely Running costs and this will be fine-tuned by looking at the vessels Class history and other records. Why these details are important needs also to be explained. It is easy to say that a big ship needs more paint than a small one but it's bigger and likely earns more money. But ships need spares and a valve or cylinder head on a small vessel might come on board by hand. On a large vessel it will need a boat and a crane. And if the big ship is on a regular series of voyages from NW Australia to China, generally in good weather with modern ports and shore equipment then the wear and tear on the paint work may be a lot less than on a smaller Handy vessel in and out of all sorts of ports with a variety of equipment being used on board and ashore in all weathers.

Part (b) asked for details of the typical costs included in the actual budget for daily operating/running cost and should have been better done. A brief list will get some marks but details get more. Part (c) was done better with a range of reporting to check performance and some good and topical reasons why significant variations might occur in a budget.

Q5. This was a three-part question about a potential voyage from Philadelphia to Fremantle with a cubic cargo of Soya Beans. Three routes were available via, the Suez Canal, the Panama Canal or the Cape of Good Hope (CoGH) all of similar distance. You were not required to choose one of these, merely in part (a) to show what factors you would take into account in making your choice and this has been asked before with varying results. Given the time of year September one factor which would apply to all three would be the Hurricane season on the East Coast of the US but this would be much more a factor via Panama. The current situation regarding the lack of rain in Panama, and the lower drafts permitted would also be a factor here together with delays and the current high cost of booking a Transit slot. Going via Suez would also have its problems with air bourn attacks on shipping in the southern Red Sea, piracy and possible poor weather in the Arabian Sea being an issue. There would also be AWRP and some owners refusing to use the route. Not mentioned in the question but always an issue would be bunkers and ports on the routes. These were less numerous and more expensive via the Cape. There are also the commercial issues, what is agreed or prohibited in the CP, who pays for the Canal costs, can you take the max cargo, are load lines an issue? Part (b) asked what resources were available to assist you and the obvious ones would be agents, bunker brokers and reference materials together with a weather routeing service. Part (c) was the requirement to show on a map the three different routes with the main oceans, seas, gulfs and capes on each route. As you were given Philadelphia, Fremantle, Suez, Panama, and the CoGH, marking these and the routes on the map was important but some chose not to do this, or were unaware of the location of the ports and uncertain about the Canals. But you should also have marked on the map the North and South Atlantic, the Mediterranean and Caribbean Seas, Indian and Pacific Oceans, the Straits of Gibraltar, Red Sea, Gulf of Aden, Gulf of Guinea, Cristobal, Balboa, Suez, Australia, the USA, and possibly Torres Strait, the Tasman Sea and Cape Leeuwin. You should know these because this is the shipping world you live in and the ships are going to these places. How many do you know?

Q6. The role of the Classification Society (Class) is to be an independent check on the condition of the vessel to ensure that the vessel is maintaining the Standards of Construction and Operation set by Class. They will also offer a variety of other services provided by Naval Architects, Surveyors, Engineers, Metallurgists and IT specialists advising on all areas of ship design and safety. Many will also provide a service to Flag states which delegate the task of issuing certificates to Class acting as agents.

Part (b) of the question was done quite well with many candidates showing some familiarity with the normal 4/5-year Special survey cycle, verified by Annual and Intermediate ones. The reasons for other surveys such as after Damage was also done well. Part (c) should have been done better and the certificates issued by Class should be known for what they certify, their validity and verifications. It is also important to know that **Flag** normally issues some of the certificates on board including Registry, Tonnage, the Radio Licence and the Minimum Manning Certificate.

Q7. This was a two-part question about (a) bunkering, one of the highest cost items for a vessel's owner and (b) the two main emissions areas on the world's seas and coasts. Part (a) asked the candidate to explain as fully as possible how to ensure you got the best quality bunkers at the right price and what checks you would take to try to ensure this. You are assumed to be intelligent but obvious statements such as "I will buy when the market is Low" or "I will buy from a supplier on my route" do not get marks and on a voyage across an ocean neither of these might be available. You should be familiar with the major bunker ports and why these are successful so location is a start. Competition, Timing, Port costs, Local refining and storage and additional services are all factors but

are out of your hands. But you can control choosing your supplier, their reputation, your experience with them, your contract, your ships crew's behaviour and knowledge. Get additional help on buying, quality, quantity, sampling and testing. And one further caution, if the price is low, why?

Part (b) The question was about the two different sulphur emissions areas. First the easy one, most of the world is still on Max 0.5%S, whether from LSFO, LSGO, or a scrubber except for the following where the maximum permitted emissions of 0.1%S is mandated in a series of ECAs, SECAs or special areas such as the EU Directive which many candidates even from EU countries seem blissfully unaware. You should know about the Baltic Sea, North Sea, English Channel, the coast line of North America out to a distance of 200NM, US overseas territories and Hawaii, major ports in South Korea and the area around Hainan Island in south China and two major Chinese rivers.

Q8. A question on acronyms was a popular choice given that it was at the end of the paper and candidates had five to choose out of eight and four marks as a maximum each. Two that should have been easy such as AWRP and IOPP, one IMSBC that scored highly as there was a lot to say, a couple of operational terms WIBON and NDFCA PMQS, the latter more common in the tanker trades and three CII, EEXI and IEEC becoming more prominent with climate change. In general, the standard was quite high with most knowing what the letters stood for and explaining, often in some detail, each one chosen and gaining full marks. You should always bear in mind that each scores a max of four marks so concentrate on getting as much detail about the subject down on the paper but briefly as possible to let the examiner know you are familiar with the term.