PORT AGENCY (PA) 2003

Overall Comments
A reasonable year with many candidates showing that serious revision had been done. Bearing in mind that this is a favourite paper with Foundation Diploma candidates, the results were particularly pleasing.

Question 1 – Cash Flow
This question was handled well by those who attempted it. Most gave commonsense answers that covered the salient issues. Obtaining advance funding, controlling payment to sub-contracted service providers, ensuring good debt and credit control methods were the topics which earned marks. Few candidates developed the answer about how to tackle the crippling effect that poor cash-flow can have on a business.

Question 2 – “Added Value Services”
The question demanded a formal response (“a report to the board” of a major agency) and many candidates penalised themselves by ignoring the “formal” aspect. However, most candidates appeared comfortable with the term “added value services” and indeed went on to describe several in some detail. The most obvious were freight forwarding, warehousing and stevedoring and other functions with a direct link to port agency activities.

Question 3 – Repairs to a Ship Under a Detention Order
This question was generally poorly answered. One main point which was expected was to see the sort of relationship with the principal that the candidate had decided to assume which would, of course be a determining factor.

Many candidates displayed an inability to tackle a question with more than one issue. Several tried to apply a “fit all” answer instead of considering the various questions raised. For example many candidates entirely missed the implication of the agent having been nominated by the charterers.

Question 4 – Time Sheet
The usual mixed bag of answers, with only a few managing to get the correct answer. Several made small arithmetical errors but still received reward for getting the principle right. Sadly a large number showed little knowledge at all as to how to construct an answer to this type of question, which is worrying when one considers how fundamental this subject is to port agency.

Question 5 - Ship Types
It was pleasing to find most candidates supplying competent sketches. However, many ignored the part of the question which demanded comment on the cargoes and ports of call for the vessels concerned.
Question 6 - Erroneously Given Port Information
A practical question involving knowledge of basic agency law but it appeared to frighten away most candidates. Those who did attempt it appeared to have little grasp of the liability involved and few thought of the help that a Shipbrokers P&I Club could provide.

Question 7 - Abbreviations/definitions
A well answered question with most candidates showing a good range of knowledge. Incidentally FOW can mean Free on Wharf or First Open Water; either answer received full marks.

Question 8 – General Average
Candidates showed an excellent knowledge of General Average. Indeed many discussed average bonds and particular average at will, showing in-depth studying of this subject. Sadly, however, there were those who suffered the “green light syndrome” and interpreted the question as “write everything you know about General Average” but completely forgot to make any mention of cargo clearance etc.

Conclusion
One tends to encounter the same problems every year but they have to be mentioned. Hardy annuals include only answering part of a multi-part question; ignoring instructions to “write a report/letter etc.” reacting to a “green light”; failing to practice producing time sheets etc.