Overall Comments

In general terms, it was observed that candidates for the November 2014 Shipping Business examinations were better prepared than those attempting the April 2014 paper.

A few candidates continued to misunderstand that some questions are drafted in two parts and, as a result, tended to concentrate on the first part, with the second part either not attempted at all or regarded as an afterthought when, in reality, both parts are allocated equal marks in most cases.

In the relevant questions, those students who annotated the world maps with country names, trade routes, danger areas etc gained additional marks and, as always, those who had taken the time to prepare well and who had revised the subject matter were rewarded with a good overall grade.

For those candidates who failed this time, it was evident that just a little more preparation, effort and knowledge gained through a stringent revision programme should be enough to gain additional marks in April.

Question one

This two part question produced a few well prepared answers with most candidates able to identify and expand upon the additional duties undertaken by a liner agent compared to those performed by a general port agent.

It was apparent that some candidates did not spend equal time on the second part of the question and a fair proportion completely failed to explain why a liner company might want to employ an independent agent.

Question two

Whilst attempting this question, many candidates failed to clearly identify the similarities and differences between voyage and time charters but, instead, explained what each type of fixture involved. A few candidates failed to read the question correctly and merely listed the similarities and differences when the question was asking for these to be discussed.

Question three

Most candidates made a good attempt at this question and provided the Examiner with the main types of vessels and general sizes, some giving some very good descriptions indeed. Better answers mentioned major trading patterns and used the world map to provide additional information. Very few candidates mentioned the tanker vetting process along with the use of World scale.
Question four

It was disappointing to witness that a large majority of candidates did not draft their answer to this question in formal business letter format. Although the majority of students provided comprehensive answers, others did not go into enough detail on the Documentary Letter of Credit process.

Question five

A few candidates provided well rounded answers paying particular attention to both parts of the question, but some thought it acceptable to provide commentary on the three main functions of the Bill of Lading and completely forgot to answer the second part, or only provided a few lines as to why a B/L would be made out ‘To Order’. There were very few answers that added a diagram to display the passage of a Bill of Lading through a Documentary Letter of Credit.

Question six

In general terms, this question was answered quite well, although a few students did not discuss all four organisations which lost vital marks. Historical reference to dates, membership numbers etc was quite scarce although most students managed to cover the basic required for a pass mark. Some candidates confused the International Chamber of Commerce with the International Chamber of Shipping, emphasising the point that students should know their subject matter thoroughly prior to attempting their answer.

Question seven

Attempted by only a few students, this question was quite poorly answered. Whilst most candidates attempting this question conveyed a general understanding of the process of classification, types of organisation and method of operation, very few were able to provide criticism of the system and any relevant alternatives.

Question eight

There were some very good answers to this question outlining piracy hotspots and making good use of the world map. Some answers included the Maritime Security Centre and the use of international recognised transit corridors and some students provided explanations relating to precautions including extra lookouts, armed guards and the use of fire hoses.

Those students who failed to annotate the map with country names lost valuable marks.