




QUEENSLAND  
**tourism**  
awards

# Your Guide to Writing an Award Winning Submission

“Winning a Queensland  
Tourism Award has been  
paramount in gaining  
recognition within the  
industry and among consumers.”



## SECTION 2: Creating a great submission

This section contains lots of useful information, hints and tips on how to create a great submission.

### Organising your answers

Make sure you organise each answer in a logical way. This helps the reader (your Tourism Award Judge) to maintain interest and build up a coherent picture in their mind of what you are saying. This is particularly important for long answers.

Fortunately, most questions have a Tip that can provide a clear ready-made structure for your answer, if you choose to use it. For example, Question 5c) as provided in most categories, reads:

**5c) Describe how your business cares for the local environment.**

The Tip reads:

*Explain your commitment to environmental sustainability and detail the activities you conduct in relation to conserving and measuring water, waste management and energy.*

So after a few introductory words you simply deal with each of the items in the Tip one after another.

A good way to deal with the items is to have a paragraph or two about each one, starting the first paragraph for an item with the name of the item in italics followed by a colon.

Here's an example:

***Energy and fuel use:*** We continued to conserve and lower our electricity use, achieving a 22% reduction compared to the previous year from xx kilowatts to xx kilowatts. (Don't forget to validate your answers where possible).

Using italics and/or bold lettering and/or colour to start the item signals to the reader that the following content is about that item. But don't overuse these tools, as they will lose their impact.



## Answering the question

One of the hardest skills to master in writing your submission is answering the question. Sounds ridiculous, but to answer a question you need to first understand exactly (and that means exactly) what the question is asking.

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Let's look at an example. In **Category 1 Major Tourist Attractions, Question 1a)** says:

*"Demonstrate your eligibility for this category as related to the descriptor above and provide a brief overview on the nature and history of the business."*

The "descriptor" reads:

*"This category recognises natural or built tourist attractions that attract amongst the highest visitor numbers during the qualifying period for Queensland."*

The Tip that accompanies **Part 1a)** reads:

*"Take care to ensure you have entered the right category and that your response aligns to the category descriptor. Failure to demonstrate your eligibility will be reflected in your score. Refer to the ABOUT US section of your website as this may assist with this response. Judges will want to know how and when the business started, who works in the business, where it is located and how it has developed over the years. A map will be helpful here."*

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Let's look at **Question 1a)** in detail. The question has 3 parts.

The key words in the first part of the question is, "Demonstrate" and "eligibility". "Demonstrate" means explain the existence and show proof. "Eligibility" is referring to the descriptor and the qualifying period.

The second part of the question states "provide a brief overview of the nature of your business".

And the third part asks for "a brief overview of the history of your business".

This is where the Tip for this question comes in handy. Its says "Judges will want to know how and when the business started, who works in the business, where it is located and how it has developed over the years. A map will be helpful here."

After reading your answer, the Judges should not only understand what it is you do, the structure of your business, where it is etc., they should also be in no doubt you are a Major Tourism Attraction and are definitely eligible to enter **Category 1**.

### **TIP: WRITE YOUR ANSWER WITH PASSION**

It is always good when judges can feel the level of pride and excitement that the operator has for their product as they read the submission. If you are excited about what you do and what you have achieved, it will come across in the submission and makes for a great read.

## TOP TIP:

Here is a good way to ensure that you fully understand what the question is asking, so you may complete the answer in full and gain maximum points. Take a highlighter pen and mark the key points in the following areas:

- The question descriptor
- The formal question e.g. **Question 4c)** and
- The Tip Section provided which is relevant to that question.

### Example:

#### Category 21 – Standard Accommodation

**Category Descriptor:** This category is open – but not limited to – motels, hotels, self-catering, cabins, backpackers and pub accommodation. The **focus** of this award is on both the **facilities** and **services** that **enhance** the tourism **experience**.

#### Question 4. Customer Service

**Question Part: Q4 c)** Describe how you **measure** customer **satisfaction** and **identify** areas for **improvement**. (5 points)

**Tip: Q4 c)** What **processes** do you have in place to **understand how** your customer **feels** about your product service? For **example**; feedback forms, monitoring social media, blogs, mystery shoppers etc. Consider providing a **case study/example** where you have implemented a **change** based on customer **feedback**.

Be conscious that when you write your answer for this question, that you cover all points of the question that have been highlighted. Also, if possible, ensure that these key points are also highlighted by use of formatting in your answer.

Examples for this could include the use of:

- Headings
- Bolded Words
- Dot Points
- Tables
- Use of Italics
- Graphs
- Colour
- Or a combination of these

## Scoring of your question

One of the key points here is don't answer questions that haven't been asked.

Almost as hard as answering the question is avoiding questions that have not been asked. We understand that context is required at times to support the information you have provided, but do not give in to your excitement about a subject and the way of doing something, and write lots of information, if the question did not specifically ask for it. It will be deemed irrelevant and will not score any additional points.

A judge is there to score the question as it has been written. If you do not like the question, please do NOT re-write it. Answer the question exactly as it stands, as fully as you are able to.

**For example, Question 2a)** asks about your goals and strategies. It doesn't ask about the 'process' you used to create those strategies.

You might be so proud of that process – the way you convened a workshop of all the stakeholders, the way that you and your team refined the strategies over many late nights until you finally presented them to the Board. And in fact you might have every reason to be proud.

Unfortunately describing the process in detail in your answer won't get you any more points – it's simply not what the question is asking. And describing it in detail, will take up valuable space that could have been used elsewhere to gain more points.

It is very important to take note of the Point Score (usually in brackets after each question) which has been allocated to each question. If a question has been allocated with 6 points and another question is only 4 points, the 6-point question will obviously need to have more relevant detail.

Even your layout could affect your final scoring. If you do not abide by the Rules of Compliance in regard to how the submission is formatted, points can and will be deducted. The total number of pages allowed, the correct type of fonts, the size of the fonts used and the line spacing are areas that you must ensure are strictly adhered to. You do NOT want to lose points due to the mistake of not checking and complying with the rules.

### Use space wisely

Submissions should be clear, well structured and to the point, and the Rules state that **your submission must not exceed a maximum of 30 pages plus a cover page** (31 pages in total). If you have more you will be penalised by having points deducted from your final score.

You can have less than 30 pages, though it is not recommended. If you do have space, allocating this space to some high quality imagery which supports your submission would be a good idea.

Chances are, though, you will want to use every single one of the 30 pages to answer the questions well. If that's the case, use the space wisely. This means making sure that some answers don't take up so many pages that you don't have enough room to fully answer the other questions. The problem with doing that is that no matter how much you write, no matter how comprehensive your answer to a question you will never get more than the points allocated to that question.

## Speak directly to the reader

One of the most important things your submission must do is speak directly to the reader. Your submission will be read by people, not machines, and those people want to hear from you and about you.

To do this, use what's called the "active voice", **not** the "passive voice".

The **active voice** gives a sense of involvement and responsibility, and so speaks to the reader. It uses "we", "I", "he", "she" and "they".

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Here's some examples:

***"The Marketing Manager decided to advertise in Singapore. She was confident that Singaporeans would enjoy staying at the resort."***

***"The Customer Service Manager trained the Front Desk staff to greet every guest with a pleasant and standard greeting and instructed them to smile."***

***"Prices include GST."***

The **passive voice** removes involvement and responsibility and so keeps the reader at arms length. It uses "it", "of", "were" and "was". Here's the same examples:

***"It was decided to advertise in Singapore. It was believed that the Singapore market would be suited to the resort."***

***"The Front Desk staff were trained in a standardised greeting and were instructed to smile."***

***"Prices are inclusive of GST."***

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Some people believe that the passive voice is the professional way to write. So at the end of a letter they will say:

***"Do not hesitate to contact the undersigned if there are any questions."***

Rather than:

***"If you have any questions please contact me."***

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The passive voice is more formal and was very popular many years ago, but not today. So it is advisable not to use the passive voice, and speak directly to the readers.

Saying that, as the tourism award submission is still a formal document, it is recommended not to talk to the Judges directly using the word "you". An example would be, instead of writing "you can see from the photo to the right that the guests were very satisfied", write "as the photo to the right shows, the guests were very satisfied".

## Use plain language

Organisations sometimes talk like this: “By transitioning to best practice benchmarking using leading edge methodologies, our commitment to customer-focused outcomes creates world class stakeholder value.”

If you have no idea what this means, you are not alone. Avoid this kind of language. Speak simply and directly.

And if you absolutely must use the word “commitment”, give examples that show that you actually are committed.

## Being honest

Only an excellent product can win a Queensland Tourism Award. But excellent is not always perfect. No operation is perfect – they all face challenges and have problems and the judges are aware of this, so please be honest in answering your question.

So even though your submission is designed to showcase your product in its best light, be up front about problems and even failures if they are relevant to your answer. Don't be tempted to gloss over difficulties or pretend everything always went well.

The Judges don't expect your product to be perfect or to have a perfect track record in every area. What matters is how you dealt with adversity, and what you learned from it.

For example, talking about how you successfully dealt with a guest complaint is a good way of showing your commitment to customer service. Talking about a failed attempt to deal with a guest complaint, and what you learned that you later put into practice, could be an even better way of showing how much you value customer service.



## It is not always about you

Your Tourism Award submission will hopefully be full of lots of qualified facts and figures to support your claims. All that is great, but it is not always about the business. Your customers often have a lot to say and the judges would like to hear it.

Providing guest comments and testimonials is an important way to showcase your product from the view of your customer. When supplying an extract from a client testimonial, it is always recommended to include who it came from, where it was extracted from and when it was originally provided.

“Wow! What an experience. This place didn't just meet our high expectations, it exceeded them. Thank you.”

*K. Downing, Email extract, 11 Apr 15*

“I highly recommend this family friendly property. The management and staff did all they could to keep our 3 kids occupied. We will be back!”

*M. Fellow, Facebook, 10 Feb 15*

**TIP: ENSURE YOUR COMMENTS ARE FROM THE YEAR UNDER REVIEW**



## Formatting your submission

### Tables and bullet points

Tables are a great way to present lots of information in a condensed format. In an Awards submission, unlike regular text, tables can be single line spaced rather than 1.5 line spaced.

But this strength is also their greatest weakness. Unfortunately, that denseness of information also makes it harder for the reader to take in all the information.

To help the reader make sense of the information in a table, you need to organise the information in a simple and logical manner.

Tables help you immediately with organising information because they have a number of columns, each of which you can give a heading. So if you give one of the columns the heading “Outcomes”, you know to put information about outcomes in that column. Simple.

However, tables also have rows, and these aren’t so easy. Whenever you create a table, use an organising principle for the rows. An organising principle is a clear and logical order for the rows.

Here’s an example. **Question 1b)** asks about the range of products/services offered. Take a look at the following tables which shows how a white water rafting operator might show their product range:

Expedition Name	Duration	Difficulty	Price
Absolutely Xtreme	2 hours	High	\$250
Advanced White Water	4 hours	High	\$490
Canyon Adventure	2 hours	Medium	\$180
Freak Out Big Time	2.5 hours	High	\$270
Just for Beginners	1 hour	Low	\$120
OMG Simply Awesome	3 hours	Medium	\$360
Thrillseekers	3 hours	High	\$380

Difficulty	Duration	Expedition Name	Price
Low	1 hour	Just for Beginners	\$120
Medium	2 hours	Canyon Adventure	\$180
	3 hours	OMG Simply Awesome	\$360
High	2 hours	Absolutely Xtreme	\$250
	2.5 hour	Freak Out Big Time	\$270
	3 hours	Thrillseekers	\$380
	4 hours	Advanced White Water	\$490

All of a sudden it's easy to understand what the business offers. The business mainly targets experienced rafters, especially those looking for an experience with a high degree of difficulty but it also provides one offering for beginners. Tours range from 1 to 4 hours. The price increases as duration increases, as you would expect, but also as the degree of difficulty increases.

Here are a couple of other examples of how a table could be set out.

Difficulty	Duration	Expedition Name	Price
<b>Low</b>	1 hour	Just for Beginners	\$120
<b>Medium</b>	2 hours	Canyon Adventure	\$180
	3 hours	OMG Simply Awesome	\$360
<b>High</b>	2 hours	Absolutely Xtreme	\$250
	2.5 hour	Freak Out Big Time	\$270
	3 hours	Thrillseekers	\$380
	4 hours	Advanced White Water	\$490

Accreditation	
Program	Status at end June 2015
<b>Star Ratings Australia</b>	Accredited since 2002, 4 star rating updated March 2015
<b>Eco-Tourism Australia</b>	Advanced Ecotourism status achieved December 2014

Customer Service Training				
Department	No. of Staff	Basic	No. of Staff	Advanced
Front Desk	5	75%	3	30%
Gardening	2	100%	1	100%
Administration	2	40%	1	20%
Housekeeping	3	70%	2	80%

The use of headings and/or bullet points are also a great way to organise and format your information. They:

- Show your points in a structured way
- Tend to be short and easy to read
- Break up large amounts of text
- Immediately showcase the key areas you wish to highlight

Using colour in your headings is also a good way to break up and highlight key components of your answer.

Be careful with the amount of tables and bullet points you use in your submission. It may be tempting to include a mass of tables and bullet points, particularly as tables can be single line spaced, and you may believe you can fit in so much more information compared to text which has to have 1.5 line spacing.

That's true, but using lots of tables and bullet points has two downsides.

First, even with good organisation lots of tables become hard to follow.

Second, and this is really important, tables and bullet points don't show passion.

There's a reason why no romantic poetry has ever been written in table form. Imagine Keats "*A Thing of Beauty is a Joy Forever*" in table form. And there's a reason why no great speeches have ever been delivered using bullet points. Imagine if Martin Luther King delivered his "*I Have A Dream*" speech using bullet points.

**Text shows passion. Use it.**

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## Paragraphs

Don't have paragraphs that are too long. Paragraphs not only break up the flow of ideas in an answer, they help the reader organise the ideas in their mind.

While there's no ideal paragraph size, it's safe to say that any paragraph that is more than half a page long is probably too long. And a paragraph that goes over more than one page is definitely too long.

So use paragraphs to show the flow of ideas. If you have a really long paragraph, look for a logical place to break it up.

Conversely, don't have lots of really short paragraphs in the way that this Guide does. This Guide is designed to be informal and conversational, while submissions are formal documents.

Some people say that each paragraph should contain only one idea or concept, and that the first sentence should state that concept, with the rest of the paragraph providing detail. If you can achieve this, that's great, but be aware it can be difficult in practice.

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**TIP: IT IS ADVISABLE NEVER TO PROVIDE A PAGE OF TEXT WITHOUT ANY FORMATTING**

Doing this, means you are leaving it up to the judges to come up with what they believe are your key points.

## Justification

Except in tables make your text justified, as that is more pleasing to the reader's eye. Justification is where the right hand edge of the text is straight rather than ragged. Word software programs can do this easily, so there's no reason to avoid it. Here are two illustrative examples:

This is an example of text that is not justified. The edge of the text on the right hand side is ragged, so the paragraph tends to look untidy. Some people call this type of text "left aligned". Most people prefer to read justified text, although not everyone agrees with this point of view.

This is an example of text that is justified. The edge of the text on the right hand side is straight (apart from the final line), so the paragraph tends to look neat. Most people prefer to read justified text, although not everyone agrees with this point of view.

**TIP: KEEP YOUR MARGINS SPACIOUS, AND DO NOT USE COLUMNS**

## Page orientation, margins and columns

**The rules specify that you must use portrait mode, not landscape mode, and you must not use columns.**

Portrait mode is where the page is upright, while landscape mode is where the page is on its side. Within the text you are not allowed to use columns, such as newspapers use. So don't be tempted.

However, you can use any size margins you like. The default margins in word software programs tend to be very large, so make the margins smaller or you will lose a lot of space unnecessarily. But don't make the margins tiny – text on a page tends to look strange without a reasonable amount of white space around it.



*Above sample shows shorter paragraphs, spacious page margins and justified text*



*Above sample shows long paragraphs, small page margins and text is left justified*

## Including Photos

**“A picture is worth a thousand words,” goes the old saying, and that can be true for a Tourism Award submission. Photos can be a powerful way of showing what can be difficult to say in words. The other great thing about photos is that they help break up the monotony of lots of text.**

But be careful. Photos can take a lot of room on the page. Use a photo only where it adds value to the text by helping the Judge visualise what you are saying.

For example, for a tour operator a photo of a bus probably doesn't add much value compared to saying “we use buses” in the text. However, a photo of four different buses, ordered from smallest to largest, is a powerful way of accompanying the text “we use four types of buses ranging from 12 seaters through to 46 seaters”. The Judge reading the submission can immediately see from the photo the range of sizes.

Similarly, for a hotel, a photo of a smiling Front Desk person at the Reception counter is nice but probably doesn't add much. However, where the text reads “the Reception area is stunningly designed in black marble and teak, and complements the white and burgundy of the staff uniforms”, a photo would be a must.

Ensure that photos aren't too small, and use a caption where it's not obvious what the photo is about, or where you want to draw attention to something in the image.



Notes

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**For further advice & information please contact:  
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**P (07) 3236 1445**

**E awards@qtic.com.au**

**W queenslandtourismawards.com.au**