Examiner's Report

January 2010

GCE Applied ICT 6958 Paper 01

Managing ICT Projects

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Important information

This specification has been updated and ALL candidates will be assessed on the updated version from SUMMER 2010. This version which has a blue cover and has been sent out to centres, many centres have attended the free inset sessions.

Moderated Units
Assessment Issues
Candidates need to supply explicit evidence to support their achievement of the criteria in the various marking grids. It is easier to confirm marks if the evidence is easy to find and supplied in an explicit form.

Assessors must use the e-sheets as an opportunity to explain why they have awarded marks, there are two advantages to this for the centre. If the moderator can see why and where marks are awarded it is easier to agree with the centre marks, secondly if the centre marks cannot be agreed then the moderator can give better guidance to help future assessment.

A number of centres still do not meet deadlines for submitting work to the moderators; the deadlines are published in advance and must be kept unless special permission has been obtained in advance from Edexcel. Permission will only be granted in exceptional circumstances. Centres who miss the deadline risk having the results delayed or the candidates recorded as absent.

Each unit must be on a separate CD, even if sent to the same moderator. Each unit will forwarded to different principal moderators for monitoring and auditing purposes.

Unit 8: Managing ICT Projects (6958)

General Comments

The entry for this unit was small this January. Moderated marks were in the range 5-53. The eportfolios were spread across these marks fairly evenly. However, it was good to see a good number of eportfolios accessing marks in the 30s although not many in the 40s and 50s this window.

Strand a was assessed within national standards in the main. The evidence for stand b addressed the strand more accurately. The evidence for strand c was often very generously assessed. It does appear that not all centres fully appreciate the requirements of strand d.

Many candidates still are not appearing to appreciate that the evidence in all 5 strands is very interlinked and, as a consequence, do not address some of the aspects of this unit very well. The revised specification contains a lot more guidance on the delivery of this unit. See the Teaching and learning strategies on pages 147-149.

Centres are asked to read this report in conjunction with the more detailed report of Summer 2009. This applies to all 5 strands for this unit.

Comments on strand A

Most candidates did produce a Progress Report and Definition of Scope relating to this unit rather than trying to combine with either units 10 or 11. Overall this strand was assessed within national standards. However, there were weaknesses still observed. Not all candidates are relating the risks to the implementation of the project and few are categorising the risks. This is a requirement for the higher marks band in strand b.
Although more candidates are referring to the Impact on Personnel and Practices, the evidence often does not demonstrate understanding of this. Candidates should be aware that a new system can have a major impact on employees' jobs, working patterns, job descriptions, contracts of employment etc.
Some candidates are still just repeating the content of the Proposal in the Definition of Scope which does not demonstrate an understanding of the difference between these documents. Some candidates are not explicitly listing the stakeholders which is required nor giving a roadmap, review dates, completion date which are all required and form the basis of the plans produced for strand b.

Comments on strand B

Practically all candidates used project management software which is a requirement for this unit. The assessment of this strand was much improved. There were still instances of candidates moving the handover date forward in each plan which is not correct and does not show the product being implemented using project management methods. Most candidates included slippage/contingency time in the plans to take risks into account. However, many did not include this in a sensible manner and there were instances of this appearing after the handover date! Again this strand was evidenced well when candidates produced a log explaining what had occurred and provided a link to the current version of the plan and often also relevant communication with the stakeholders including minutes of meetings. Few candidates demonstrated understanding of how the plan should be used to produce progress reports for meetings.

Comments on strand C

There were still many instances of this strand being generously assessed although more evidence did address marks in mark band 2. However, few candidates provided sufficient evidence to move into mark band 3.   There were still many candidates who only appeared to use one other stakeholder, i.e. the client and made no reference to any others. Such evidence restricts candidates to mark band 1.   Other candidates simply listed several stakeholders in the minutes of meetings but did not provide any evidence of how they contributed to the project. Some just said "Staff of XX, Client, Senior Manager".   The stakeholders need to be clearly listed and defined.   The differences in the roles of the Senior Manager and Client appeared not to have appreciated by many candidates.

Few candidates produced evidence of Progress Reports being presented at Review Meetings despite this having been highlighted in previous reports and is clearly mentioned in the Assessment Guidance for mark band 1.

The minutes of meetings were often poorly presented with little content to show how the project was being progressed or how the stakeholders were contributing to the project.

Informal communication was often just a screen shot of an email sending out an agenda but with no comments relating to the project itself.

Not all candidates appeared to be running their own project demonstrating their role as a Project Manager in their own right and chairing the meetings themselves but seem to be attending a class meeting and then writing minutes as it if was their own meeting.

The comments from the Summer 2009 report are very relevant:
"This strand carries 20 marks and there are several aspects to be evidenced if candidates wish to access all of them:
- Communication with a range of stakeholders – see 8.2
- Different kinds of communication, eg different kinds of meetings, quick conversations (face to face, telephone, email etc), peer and end user testing etc
- Progress reports

This strand was often generously assessed and marks awarded in MB2 and MB3 although not all aspects required for MB1 had been addressed.

Many candidates only produced minutes of meetings and no other form of communication, some of these were with only one other stakeholder. Many meetings referred to the product and made no reference to the progression of the project against the current version of the plan. A high number of candidates listed stakeholders in strand a but did not appear to use them in the implementation of the project.

Although agendas and minutes were usually in evidence, many documents were poorly presented both in layout and content. There were many minutes with no attendees listed, or a date or venue given. There were often several minutes at the start of the project and no reviews in the middle. Not all candidates included an End of Project Review Meeting with all stakeholders once the product had been handed over to the client.

Many candidates failed to understand the importance of Progress reports. Ideally these would be reports presented by the Project Manager to the Stakeholders at Review Meetings.   The reports should explain where the project is in relation to the plan and look at any changes needing to be made to ensure the handover date will be met.

The evidencing of informal communication was ignored by a large number of candidates and some produced content of emails but no proof of any sending and receipt of such communication.   Those candidates that did evidence informal communication often just submitted one or two emails or memos from the candidate giving the date of a meeting.   It would be expected that informal communication would relate to various aspects of the progression of the project, eg informal testing sessions with peer testers, informal chat with Senior Manager about some aspects of the progress of the project, contact with Client to check something etc.   Some candidates produced diaries/logs detailing all contact with stakeholders with a link to any related documents.   This was often very effective."

Comments on strand D

This strand was generously assessed by many centres and often the marks were related to the product and **not the project management of the product**. Quite a number of candidates neglected to include any explicit evidence to demonstrate the product had been delivered on the relevant handover date.
The plans, progress reports, minutes of meetings plus evidence of the actual handover all help evidence this strand. In addition the product should be included in the eportfolio.

Comments on strand E

Many candidates are still trying to produce an evaluation to address this unit and either units 10 or 11 without managing to address either unit evaluation well. It is strongly advised that candidates produce a totally separate evaluation for each unit and read the requirements of the relevant strand to ensure the evaluations address the right unit correctly.   The comments made in Summer 2009 were again relevant: "Not all candidates held an End of Project Review Meeting which meant that the marks for this strand could not be accessed. Many that did hold such a meeting, failed to obtain and record feedback from the stakeholders which limited the achievement to MB1.   Even when feedback was obtained, it was not always relevant to the requirements of this strand with, more often, comments on the actual product rather than the effectiveness of the management of the project.   Very often the assessment was very generous and candidates placed in too high a mark band. Centres would be well advised to ensure candidates understand the importance of producing an agenda for the final meeting that enables them to obtain the relevant feedback from all stakeholders used which means this strand can be addressed effectively."

Grade Boundary January 2010

6958	Total	A	B	C	D	E
Raw Mark	60	46	40	34	28	23
UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40