

Moderators' Report
Principal Moderator Feedback

June 2011

Applied GCE
6952 01 – The Digital Economy

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General Comments

As this is a core unit, there were a large number of entries again this summer. It was good to see that a good number of eportfolios accessing marks in the 40s and high 50s. Many candidates are producing work of a good quality and many centres are assessing to national standards.

Although it is very pleasing to see the majority of centres assessing to national standards, it was disappointing to see that there are still a number of centres who are not. In some cases, the same weaknesses that have been identified in previous moderator reports to the centre have not been addressed.

It would seem that not all centres had been referring to the revised specification when awarding marks to the 5 strands for this unit.

It is also apparent that some centres are not taking notice of the Principal Moderator Reports which are written after each moderation series. These reports give advice on weaknesses in assessment that have been observed with guidance on how to address these.

In addition centres are able to seek further guidance and clarification through the Ask the Expert service. The Examiners' reports for all units can be accessed via the Applied GCE ICT section of Edexcel.com.

Comments on strand a

It was very good to see that, again, there was some excellent evidence presented for this strand with many candidates accessing mark band 3 and, indeed, all the marks. Overall this strand was assessed to national standards.

Most candidates chose suitable transactional websites to evaluate but there were still instances of eBay being used. Candidates who chose Amazon did not always address the requirements of the strand well as Amazon includes so much that is not relevant to this strand, including the Auction section, and is not a good choice. It would also be a good idea not to use Play.com as this has been used as an inset exemplar and candidates are tempted to reuse some of the content which does not demonstrate the independent approach required for the higher mark bands. Candidates who addressed this strand well tended to select smaller sites which enabled them to look at the overall design of the site more effectively. Sites should be chosen that enable goods to be ordered from stock and delivered to a stated address as this enables strand to be addressed more easily.

There are many thousands of transactional websites and it is expected that all candidates within a centre select a different website.

Many candidates appeared to be following a set checklist with similar evidence across a cohort. Candidates accessing the higher mark bands should demonstrate a more independent approach and consider 2.3 and 2.5 in the features described and evaluated. Very often high marks were awarded as a range of features had been covered but the detail and evaluative comments were limited which did not support the marks awarded. Detailed descriptions are required for mark band 2 and comprehensive descriptions of the main features of the site's designs for mark band 3. Some candidates had been awarded high marks although few less obvious features had been included in the evidence.

A good number of candidates did not address the transactional aspects of the website well and this could be seen with the payment methods described but almost nothing on the shopping basket, checkout process and capturing data. These are essential aspects of a transactional website and are expected to be present if candidates are accessing all the marks in mark band 1.

Some candidates are still concentrating on the products and content of the site rather than evaluating the effectiveness of the site's design. Many of the improvements suggested related to the products rather than improvements/enhancements of the design features of the site.

Covert and overt methods of capturing information were sometimes given as general notes rather than relating the information to the transactional website being evaluated.

It was good to see many Assessors referring to Quality of Written Communication in the feedback for this strand which is now a requirement

for this specification. However, some Assessors had added marks on for this which is incorrect.

Comments on strand b

The majority of centres are assessing to national standards for this strand and it was good to see more candidates accessing mark band 3. However, there were some candidates who did not address many aspects of 2.4 and neglected to address the back office processes, which is an essential aspect of this strand. Stock and payments are two essential aspects of a transactional website and some mention of these is expected if all the marks in mark band 1 are being awarded.

More candidates attempted to show payment systems relating to transactional websites which involve third parties but there are still many diagrams that just show manual payment methods.

There were fewer instances of plagiarism with diagrams taken from textbooks and downloaded from the old ICT microsite or from exemplars on Edexcel.com. There were a very small number of centres who appeared to have given diagrams to the candidates for them to fill in gaps, annotate and so forth. This is not a suitable approach for this AS unit. Candidates are required to create their own diagrams in order to access this strand.

Some diagrams were totally linear and did not demonstrate the different routes that could be followed, for example, what happens if an item is out of stock.

Candidates being awarded marks at the top of mark band 1 are required to produce at least 2 diagrams and a comprehensive set to access mark band 3. There were instances when candidates were being awarded marks in mark band 2 but had only produced one diagram. There were also instances when marks were awarded at the top of mark band 1 and above but there was no real evidence of back office processes.

Comments on strand c

The majority of centres are assessing this strand correctly. Many candidates are still producing general notes for this strand rather looking at the threats to the data held by an organisation and how the organisation could put in place preventative measures to protect the data collected from customers. There were also many instances of candidates looking at these issues from their own point of view and the threats to their own computers. Better candidates related their evidence to the transactional website examined in strand a.

There is still a tendency for many candidates to reproduce the wording of the legislative acts rather than describing how they can be used to help prevent threats and evaluating their effectiveness.

There was evidence of cohorts producing very similar evidence supporting a very structured approach to the strand. Candidates should look at 2.5, 2.6 and 2.7 when addressing this strand.

Some candidates did not address threats and concentrated solely a preventative measures but marks were awarded as though they had. Many candidates did not consider how effective either legislation or protective measures might be; yet were awarded marks at the top of mark band 2 or above.

Comments on strand d

This strand was often very generously assessed. Although many candidates are now addressing the strand well, it was disappointing that guidance given in previous Principal Moderator reports for this strand had not always been taken into account.

It is also apparent that not all centres referred to the revised specification and clarification given in the assessment guidance when awarding the marks to the strand.

The main issue in this series again was the lack of evidence of how output was achieved. This has been highlighted in previous reports and it is disappointing that many centres are still awarding marks in the higher mark bands although the evidence is not there. Candidates need to clearly evidence the manipulation of the database created.

Most centres are using the Edexcel datasets provided on the ICT microsite but it was good see other datasets being used. Other datasets can be used provided they are given to the candidates as one csv file so that the candidates are able to create their own structure. The datasets should also be large enough to enable trends to be identified. Although datasets do not have to be 5,000+, as is the case with the Edexcel ones, it is unlikely that less than 100 records would enable trends to be identified. There were a few instances of candidates using a dataset of only 20 records which does not address this unit properly. *Candidates should not be provided with 2 or 3 separate tables nor should they key in the data themselves.*

The same comments that have been made previously apply to this moderation window. For example:

"All too often the evidence was similar across a cohort, with the same validation rules, same queries, same graphs etc being presented. Candidates accessing the higher mark bands must demonstrate an independent approach to their work.

There were a lot of candidates who had been awarded marks at the top of mark band 2, or in mark band 3, although there were no processes evidenced to support the output. The candidates are required to show the manipulation of the database created and this is stated clearly in the revised specification. **Graphs and charts without the evidence of the queries used to produce them are not sufficient evidence.**

Many candidates who did produce the queries in design view often used limited manipulation techniques and had not addressed the requirements listed in the assessment guidance. There were also many candidates who

did not demonstrate that the database created had at least 2 tables with an enforced one-to-many link. Such evidence is required in order to access all the marks in mark band 1.

Many screen shots were too small to read and blurred when the zoom feature was used. It is important that candidates ensure the evidence presented can be read easily.

The evidence presented should demonstrate that the candidate has:

- examined a dataset
- created a suitable structure for a relational database, with at least 2 tables with an enforced one-to-many link, to include appropriate:
 - field names
 - field types
 - field sizes
 - validation
- tested the structure prior to importation of the dataset
- tested the dataset has imported into the created structure correctly
- manipulated the database to extract meaningful data (included evidence of the processes undertaken, for example, annotated queries in query design view)
- presented the data extracted in a meaningful way (too often only datasheet view was used; database reports contained inappropriate headings and repeating data; pie charts not used properly, poor labelling of charts)
- Identified at least 2 trends (mark band 2)
- Made recommendations based on trends identified (mark band 3)

Few candidates produced good evidence of the use of search criteria in the manipulation of the databases created. There was a reliance on group and count. **To access the higher end of mark band 2, there should be clear evidence of search criteria used on more than one field in a table and across tables for mark band 3.** It is expected that fields from at least 2 tables are included in the output presented and there were many instances when all the evidence presented was using one table only.

Candidates need to be able to demonstrate how a database can be used effectively. Many seem to be following structured tasks without understanding how appropriate use of search criteria can extract meaningful data and trends to enable decisions to be made. Poor presentation of the output often rendered it useless. Candidates did not appear to understand the difference between the various charts and graphs used. There were many examples of a Pie Chart being used to supposedly depict a trend. Many candidates did not seem to understand how validation can ensure databases performed efficiently."

Some candidates produced design notes relating to the tables to be produced but then evidenced a different structure. Not all candidates clearly evidenced the structure of the tables produced, i.e. field names, field lengths, field types, validation rules used. There were many instances when a relational database had not been produced either due to the omission of enforcing referential integrity or by using the flat file to produce the output.

To access all the marks in mark band 1 there needs to be explicit evidence of at least one one-to-many link. Sometimes there was a screen shot showing this but then only one-to-one links in query design view screens. Some of the screen shots did not seem to apply to the same database.

There was also evidence that some centres are using Excel to produce the trends. It is fine to use Excel to produce charts and graphs but the queries need to be produced in Access in order to address this strand.

Candidates should not include the database in the eportfolio as this is not an accepted file format and serves no purpose. Relevant screen shots, with annotation and explanation, should be used as evidence. There is no need to show every step in how to import, produce a report etc. Many candidates produced forms and explained how to do this which is not relevant to this strand.

Comments on strand e

It was good to see more candidates are making evaluative comments on the performance of the database created and also their own performance across the whole unit. However, there were still a significant number of candidates who did not seem to appreciate what was required in order to access the marks in this strand. Very often the evidence was a list of what had been done in order to create the database and the problems that had occurred when using Access.

Candidates need to remember that they need to evaluate the PERFORMANCE of the database they have created. Many said it performed well but didn't understand how limited most of the databases were and how this could be put to good effect in the evaluation. How a limited database of only 2 tables and no user interface could support a database that is easy to use is very questionable. The use of feedback was often poor and not always convincing and few candidates incorporated the feedback properly into the evaluation. All too often, the feedback was listed but not used but still marks were awarded in mark band 2.

There were still many examples of candidates evaluating their eportfolio, or sometimes their e-book! Candidates need to read the requirements of the evaluative strand for each unit – they are not all the same.

Comments on Administrative Procedures

Overall the administrative procedures have greatly improved. The majority of centres submitted the CDs on the due date. It was good to see most centres had included candidate authentication sheets either on the CD or in hard copy format and many also included the signed mark sheet which is printed off when marks are entered online. However, there were still a significant number who had neglected to include candidate authentication which meant that moderators had to chase this.

Correct naming conventions were normally used for the eportfolios but often not for the e-sheets. There were some disks with no label which means they could easily be mislaid. Overall the feedback on the e-sheets was more helpful and related to the marks awarded. However, there will still some e-

sheets with no feedback and many centres are still using a cut and paste approach which meant the feedback did not really explain the reasons why the marks were awarded.

Some e-sheets had not been totalled correctly and marks did not correspond with those on line. Moderation is against marks entered on line.

Some centres did not use the correct candidate numbers for all candidates ,which made moderation very difficult.

Some centres did not send the correct sample and there were several cases where the highest scoring candidate was not included in the sample.

Assessors should ensure they are familiar with the Guidance for Centres: Moderation of eportfolios document which is on the Applied GCE ICT section of Edexcel.com.

Most eportfolios used the correct file formats, i.e. html or PDF. A small minority of centres submitted an mdb file for evidence for strand d, which is incorrect.

Grade Boundaries

Centres are reminded that the GCE in Applied ICT is an Awarded qualification. As such, grade boundaries are subject to review each series for both written paper and coursework units.

Grade boundaries for this, and all other papers, can be found on the website on this link:

<http://www.edexcel.com/iwantto/Pages/grade-boundaries.aspx>

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