Examiners' Report
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2017

Pearson Edexcel International Advanced Level
in Applied Information and Communication
Technology (WIT02) Paper 1

The Digital Economy

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General Comments

Work across the whole mark range was moderated in this series with the majority of total marks being awarded in the highest mark bands. There was some accurate centre assessment but, overall, assessment was too generous.

There were many examples of accurate comments from assessors which, unfortunately, did not always match the marks awarded.

WIT02 is one of the mandatory AS units. The requirements are well established via the Applied ICT 6952 provenance. As a result, support and examples are well established in the public domain. The unit specification is clearly defined. The assessment criteria indicate the primary focus of the work to be submitted and the assessment guidance documents explain how and where marks are to be awarded.

Numerous examples of high marks being awarded without the necessary supporting evidence were seen. This was particularly noticeable in respect of Strand D and, to a lesser extent, strands A and E.

Most centres are encouraging a 'centre style' to the design of the eportfolio taking a very structured approach to the unit, including the use topic lists for some strands. As a result, the material submitted is often very similar across an entire cohort. This approach reflects on independence of working and disadvantages the candidates.

Immediately upon completion of the moderation, individual reports are written for centres identifying any weaknesses in the assessment.

Despite all mechanisms and support systems available to centres, some still fail to focus on the main requirements of this unit, particularly in relation to the nature and content of Strand D.

Strand A

Some very good analyses were submitted for this strand and some candidates secured well deserved marks in MB3.

The sites chosen varied across a cohort as expected. The principal requirement of the site chosen is a virtual shopping basket facility that enables goods to be ordered from stock and delivered to a stated address. The range of sites chosen was good with a good mixture of local as well as internationally known online businesses.

Most candidates addressed the aspects listed in 2.3 of the specification but some neglected to consider the transactional aspects of the site, i.e. the virtual shopping basket, payment methods and the capture of customer data in these processes.

The better reports were well illustrated with screen shots. The more able candidates evaluated the features in relation to the design of the site. This was often completed in situ which made the comments more immediately relevant. These candidates made excellent and realistic suggestions for improvement. Most included a valuables and useful summative evaluation.

However, on too many occasions, high marks were awarded where the level of detail in the descriptions and / or the range of features considered did not

support the mark. Some candidates concentrated on the products and content of the site rather than features of the site's design.

Strand B

Assessment of this strand was generally accurate.

However, there were examples of MB3 being awarded to material that does not map fully to the requirements.

All candidates who gained marks considered the 'front-end' events - login, authentication, navigating the site, choice of products - leading up to the checkout. The main omissions and weaknesses were the back-office processes and flows of information in and out of the organisation. These were often identified but the requisite flow of information was inaccurate.

The main omission involved the interaction of a business with third parties regarding stock replenishment.

The higher achieving candidates also added details of the delivery / receipt process involving the customer.

Strand C

The descriptive content in respect of threats and protective measures was usually addressed well by candidates, however, little understanding or relevance of associated legislation was shown. Assessment was frequently slightly lenient with a recurring example being top MB2 awarded based on descriptive content rather than the expected consideration of the effectiveness of both protective measures and legislation.

Material sufficiently comprehensive to address MB3 was seen and was evidenced well. It many cases, candidates had given detailed assessments of the effectiveness of methods to protect data as well the legislation. Shortcomings as well as strengths were well addressed.

Strand D

The largest mark adjustments are made in Strand D - because the material submitted failed to map to the requirements. Whether or not due to incomplete database work or merely omission of the requisite evidence,

Many candidates submitted pages step by step software specific instructions in respect of checking the data file in Excel prior to import building the database. This was not needed. Screenshots documenting the various aspects and facilities incorporated in the database, as identified in the assessment criteria, are all that is required.

Some centres are taking a very structured approach to this strand. As already mentioned this negates the candidates opportunity for independence – required to access the higher mark bands. There were examples of entire cohorts using the same structure including adding unnecessary fields, identical input masks, lookups and validation; creating generic queries thereby presenting exactly the same output.

Elements of design – ERD, data dictionaries – were often omitted entirely from portfolios and there were some obvious gaps in the evidence of creating the

tables. Detail of incorporating customisation – input masks, look ups, validation – were usually well documented but there were few good examples of comprehensive testing of the empty structure, including the relationships, prior to importing the dataset. Frequently the testing had clearly been carried out after the tables had been populated.

Perhaps the biggest and most common omission was the absence of a one-to-many relationship in the databases created. This is necessity to access the top of MB1. If absent, it precludes access to higher mark bands.

The evidencing of interrogating the system was irregular. At times it was done well but all too frequently one type of query was used several times and evidence of use of more than one table was limited in many portfolios. This tended to be centre-wide in its approach. More use of search criteria, not just group with count or sum, and the relational aspects of the database would be expected to support some of the high marks awarded.

At times queries were created without any thought about whether the information garnered would be meaningful. Often it wasn't which, in turn, meant recommendations were not sensible. As a result, there were times when the award of the highest marks could not be agreed.

Strand E

Many candidates submitted commentaries on the creation of their database rather than evaluating its performance in terms of the relationships, input masks, validation, and the facility to generate useful information.

There were many examples of candidates being awarded MB2 and above although there was no reference to any feedback in their evaluative comments. Listing feedback does not address MB2. The incorporation of feedback must be explained and how it improved the database, justified on performance grounds, is essential for the higher mark bands.

Again, in the evaluation of their own performance, candidates often described what they had done rather than evaluate their performance. Comments about time management, what they had learned, how much they had enjoyed the unit are not suitable for this strand.

Most of the evidence presented suggested that candidates did not fully understand how to evaluate a piece of work using objective criteria.