AQA

ASSESSMENT and
QUALIFICATIONS
ALLIANCE

General Certificate of Education

Information and Communication Technology 5521

Unit 3   Coursework: The Use of Generic Application Software for Task Solution

Report on the Examination

2007 examination – January series

General Comments

In this January series of the examination both the AS and A2 units showed candidates achieving a good range of marks. There was clear evidence that many candidates were well prepared for the unit that they were attempting.

Much of the work seen in this series was based on spreadsheet software where the problems selected were generally suitable for the requirements of the specification (which demands a task-based solution only). This allowed the candidates the opportunity to be successful.

Some candidates attempt systems at this stage and thus include work from the ICT6 specification. Candidates are not penalised for this work, but they will not gain credit for it unless it meets the ICT 3 marking criteria. In some cases the burden of this additional work made it difficult for the candidate to complete satisfactorily the major requirements of the ICT 3 specification section.

Specification

Some candidates incorrectly gave end user requirements from the view of the solution developer e.g. how to enter data via a lookup table, rather than what the end-user desired from an ICT solution to their task-based problem.

Where IPO work tended to be unclear, candidates simply referenced that IPO was a need but without any specific reference to the end-user requirements or without detail to explain the specific inputs, processes and outputs necessary to generate a solution to the problem. A typical example was to give a general expression for input, e.g. names, addresses and fees only, or include a description of a process that merely states that a calculation was to take place but with no further detail to explain how that calculation would be performed.

A continuing issue for some candidates when producing their designs is being able to provide adequate evidence to support third party implementation. All too often in these cases a layout of the appearance of the websites or the spreadsheets or forms is generated, but the underlying formulae or query designs are incomplete or missing. Full third party implementation is only feasible if all aspects of the solution are designed in detail and this should include design work for any macro coding which will be required to enable processes.

It is critical that candidates test the major aspects of the work. Some candidates spend far too much time testing issues such as validation or navigation at the expense of the critical tasks the project was intended to deliver. Candidates should again be advised that it is not necessary to exhaustively test each field/cell, but to include only a sample test of each type. Candidates need to establish a range of test data that will clearly test the solutions with normal, extreme and erroneous data in differing ways, yet avoid repetitive testing. A well thought out test strategy and plan can help candidates with the testing section.

Implementation

A commentary is expected in this section which details all the software features used by the candidate with *clear, easy to read* hardcopy / screenshot evidence. It is only necessary to include one sample of each type of feature, rather than repetitively show the same feature many times. The commentary should not be of how to use the software, rather of how features are used in the solution and why they are used.

Evidence for the quality of the implementation can be taken from the testing section but it is critical for the candidate to provide documentary evidence to prove that they have met the

assessment objectives. There must be clear proof to establish that the solution described has been built, and to show what skills and techniques were deployed. For example, spreadsheet solutions must include printouts of the formulae used where the cell references can be clearly identified and checked, where necessary.

Testing

It is critical that the fundamental purpose of the project is fully tested and that hard copy evidence of this is included in the coursework submitted to the Moderator. In some cases where evidence had been provided, the images were over cropped and were too small to read (and thus could not gain credit).

Unfortunately, showing corrective action is still too often ignored or attempted only very simplistically. Testing should take place as the solution is developed and it was intended by AQA that candidates follow their test plan and report on their successes and failures. Candidates then have the opportunity to show the problems that occurred, the steps they took to solve these problems and any subsequent retesting to show success.

Evaluation

Some reports contain minimal discussion and little recognition of the criteria for assessing an ICT solution.

User Documentation

User documentation was well attempted, but there was the occasional misinterpretation of the specification. In those cases the candidate produced user guides that lead the end-user through the steps needed to build or amend the solution and so generated a technical manual rather than the guide to using the solution as intended.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the **Results statistics** page of the AQA Website.