AQA

ASSESSMENT and
QUALIFICATIONS
ALLIANCE

General Certificate of Education

Applied Information and Communication Technology 8751, 8753, 8756 & 8759

IT08   Project Management

Report on the Examination

2008 examination - June series

Unit 8: Project Management (IT08)

General comments concerning A2 units

28 marks are available for AO4 in each of the A2 units. Candidates are only able to achieve 1 mark for time management and planning unless they have included an estimate of the time they anticipate that they will require in order to complete each of the tasks they have planned to do. At AS level the candidates should have learnt the rudiments of time planning and by A2 should be able to quantify the amount of time required for different parts of their work. Many candidates were able to build on their experience at AS level in order to provide evaluation criteria that they could clearly identify as quantitative and qualitative, but generally test strategies and plans were weak throughout – especially on the units where there is no tangible product to test. Candidates need to consider how to test a non-working model and how to test a design.

The construction of the portfolio and quality of written communication is awarded 4 marks and a well organised, spell checked and grammatically correct portfolio will score higher marks than one that is not. Well organised portfolios had an accurate contents page; relevant headers or footers on the work; and were divided into appropriate sections of work. Consecutive page numbering from the beginning to the end of the portfolio is essential for accurate recording of assessment decisions.

Unit IT08: Project Management

This Unit introduces candidates to the skills, techniques and tools involved in managing a project (or part of it) and working as part of a project team.

A very broad spectrum of projects had been carried out, from planning charity events, to setting up websites and organising school expeditions. The emphasis of assessment is on the processes that occur whilst carrying out the project rather than the end product itself, which allows for some projects coming to fruition after the end of the unit of work. In these cases no end product was evident apart from the results of the planning phase. This was perfectly acceptable.

Good evidence in the portfolios came from team records of activities such as minutes of team meetings, or project planning; other evidence came from individual planning and personal records of activities undertaken. Where team produced evidence was included in individual portfolios the majority of candidates made it clear what part they had taken in the processes that had produced the material, or had explained the processes that the team had gone through.

There was a substantial minority of candidates who provided portfolios that showed very little evidence of team activities having taken place. These projects often appeared to be individual projects that were stitched together at the end of the process, rather than projects to which each individual had contributed. These portfolios, on the whole, gained poor marks.

AO1 assesses the candidate's acquisition of new skills during the project and whether they were pro-active in their acquisition; their use of new software or software functions during the project; their use of project management tools and standard ways of working.

The majority of candidates clearly showed that they had acquired new skills and had attempted to use project management tools and techniques. Evidence provided often effectively covered the criteria for several rows on the Marking Grid. Better candidates had identified at the start of the project what new skills they would require and this was seen in their project planning documents.

Commonly used project management tools were Gantt charts; mind maps; calendar functions for arranging meetings; email tools; financial spreadsheets; document version controls; agenda and minutes. Better candidates were able to explain how and why they had used these techniques and tools, demonstrating their understanding of the project management principles learnt.

Some candidates did not clearly explain what new software or software functions they had used, or how they had been proactive in acquiring new skills.

Most candidates provided a clear picture of the project that was to be carried out and described the roles of the members of the team. Some candidates only listed job roles, or provided a list of tasks to be carried out, and these brief lists did not gain any marks.

Most candidates showed that effective communication had taken place but weaker candidates omitted to show that they had **acted** upon communication from other team members. A good source of evidence for this was provided by some candidates whose meeting minutes showed action points for team members that had been followed up at the next meeting.

As mentioned above better candidates provided evidence of planning at the start of the project. This often included how ICT was to be used in their part of the project. Some candidates did not provide any evidence of planning, or did not review their planning to show that plans had been carried out.

Many candidates described both their pre-existing skills and knowledge but a number of these did not say how these had been used whilst working on the project.

Better candidates provided records of having given ICT support to team members or project sponsors but some provided records of things such as giving presentations on topics that could not be regarded as ICT support. Where candidates had achieved high marks they had usually included an authenticated record of the support given, complemented by signed feedback from the other team members.

Most candidates were able to list distinct project and personal objectives. Better candidates explained the importance of these objectives or how they had been derived. In better portfolios these were accompanied by an explanation of how assessment would take place in order to judge success or failure. Candidates who gained higher marks explained who would be carrying out the assessment, when it would happen and why it was important.

Where time management was shown through the use of a Gantt chart it was often not possible to see that the candidate had made a fine estimate of the amount of time that each task would take. For more than one mark this should be shown in hours. Some candidates showed estimated duration of activities in days but did not state how many hours these days included.

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