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General Certificate of Education

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

IT15 Supporting ICT Users

Report on the Examination

2009 examination - June series

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Dr Michael Cresswell Director General.

Unit 15: Supporting ICT Users (IT15)

The unit is based on setting up and running a user support service for an identified group of users. Also required is a system for recording the problems, a user guide to accessing the support service and a help sheet for a commonly encountered software or hardware problem.

Many candidates produced excellent work for this unit, their portfolios providing copious evidence of some effective user support services, some within their own establishment, some at other educational establishments and a small minority in situations with other organisations.

Unfortunately, many candidates did not complete the portfolio in a logical way. Some failed to provide evidence of having done any real practical work at all; some used a set of centre-given problems and some did not produce a useful way to record ICT problems.

AO1 – Providing User Support service - Practical work

Row 1 – Many candidates had a good range of problems that covered the required types, gaining 1 or 2 marks quite easily. For the 3rd mark, there had to be evidence of feedback being given to the users and this feedback should be on-going if the problem is not solved immediately.

Many problems were trivial, as were the solutions offered – this does not show the competence of the support person, hence the requirement for some complex problems. A complex problem is defined as one where a combination of steps is needed to fix the problem.

Row 2 – Many candidates had carried out software installation or uninstallation, or responded to a request that meant both had to be done, plus some sort of software setting request, to gain 1 or 2 marks. The third mark again depended on evidence of feedback to the user.

Row 3 – If the problems were solved, then most gained 1 or 2 marks, but many candidates failed to provide a separate written explanation of the solutions, so could not achieve the 3rd mark.

Row 4 – Many candidates had good clear recording systems to record the problems, with solutions, gaining 1 or 2 marks. Problems passed on to more expert help were sometimes identified and those who explained why achieved the 3rd mark on the row. Some recording systems had a mechanism for organising the problems by category, a problem ID or a date/time, so that like problems could be easily picked out. Only a few stronger candidates produced evidence that this could take place, so only these few gained the 4th mark.

Row 5 – The majority of candidates gained a mark for their help sheet. Most got some feedback from a selection of users and produced an improved version for the 2nd mark.

Row 6 – To gain both marks for this row, candidates should have recorded details of the steps they took to work safely with computer equipment when providing the user support service – many did not do this. A witness statement supporting the candidate evidence is good.

AO2 – User aspects

Row 1 – Most candidates scored on this row with brief or full descriptions of the potential users of their proposed service

Row 2 – Most candidates scored 1 mark on this row for a brief description of user's roles. Better descriptions scored 2 marks.

Row 3 – Many candidates described the current support service only very briefly, or failed to do so at all; others only described their proposed service and only a very few said how the proposed service would improve the provision currently in place.

AO3 – Planning & Designing a User support service

Row 1 – Many candidates failed to write up any investigation of the current service, and so could not score on this row. Those that had, and who had then written about their planned new provision, got 2 or 3 marks. If they had checked those plans with the users of the current service and amended the plans they were able to achieve either 4 or 5 marks.

Rows 2 & 3 were changed this year, separating the problem recording sheet and the recording/cataloguing system. This meant that there were 6 marks available for these two aspects instead of 5 previously available. Most candidates scored on both rows and those who had refined their designs after use and evaluation achieved the highest marks

Row 4 – Many candidates produced a workable guide to the user support service, gaining right up to 4 marks. Few justified the design in terms of the needs of the service users, for the 5th mark.

Some candidates did not produce a guide to the support service, but a user guide to using a PC or software applications. If the support service is to be accessed via an on-line form, then it was acceptable to show how to find the form and how to fill it in.

Row 5 – The format of the guide is the medium through which it would be dispersed to the potential users of the service. A short discussion of formats is required at the design stage for the first mark. Without this, the second mark can not be awarded.

A04 – Evaluation

Row 1 – Most candidates scored at least 1 mark. Some candidates, in this and many other rows in AO4, concentrated on the system they had produced, rather than the service they had offered, and so gained fewer marks.

Row 2 – Many candidates failed to estimate the time required for each task in hours, so only 1 mark was available to them. Guidance on this had been given at standardising meetings.

Row 3 – Some candidates had monitoring comments on the time plan, or a diary, which was backed up with witness statements and were able to achieve up to maximum marks depending on the detail provided.

Row 4 – Many candidates scored 1 or 2 marks on this row by asking for comments about their help sheet and user guide. The higher marks would be gained by also having feedback on all

- aspects of their service:
- the method of contacting
- the method of informing about the problem
- the efficiency of the service provided
- response times
- effective problem resolution
- keeping the problem loggers informed and so on.

Row 5 – Most candidates scored only 1 or 2 marks on this row, failing to include any sort of test plan for their service.

Row 6 – Many candidates failed to score here, by concentrating on an evaluation of their recording system rather than the user support service. Only a few candidates were able to critically evaluate their solution.

Row 7 – There were many ways to show communication skills in this unit; the help sheet; the user guide; the write-up of problems and feedback to users. Most candidates gained 2 or 3 marks, but many portfolios were not put together in a logical way, which made them difficult to follow.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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