Examiner's Report

January 2010

GCE Applied ICT 6956 Paper 01

Technical Support

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Overall Comments

Important information

This specification has been updated and ALL candidates will be assessed on the updated version from SUMMER 2010. This version which has a blue cover and has been sent out to centres, many centres have attended the free inset sessions.

Moderated Units
Assessment Issues
Candidates need to supply explicit evidence to support their achievement of the criteria in the various marking grids. It is easier to confirm marks if the evidence is easy to find and supplied in an explicit form.

Assessors must use the e-sheets as an opportunity to explain why they have awarded marks, there are two advantages to this for the centre. If the moderator can see why and where marks are awarded it is easier to agree with the centre marks, secondly if the centre marks cannot be agreed then the moderator can give better guidance to help future assessment.

A number of centres still do not meet deadlines for submitting work to the moderators; the deadlines are published in advance and must be kept unless special permission has been obtained in advance from Edexcel. Permission will only be granted in exceptional circumstances. Centres who miss the deadline risk having the results delayed or the candidates recorded as absent.

Each unit must be on a separate CD, even if sent to the same moderator. Each unit will forwarded to different principal moderators for monitoring and auditing purposes.

Unit 6: Technical Support (6956)

General comments

The comments from previous Principal Moderators Reports are still and unfortunately in some instances valid.

Again there are still centres submitting eportfolio evidence in incorrect formats, i.e. Word files and eportfolios with links not working which indicated a lack of summative testing. As stated previously it is not the moderator's role to have to search through eportfolios and folders to find the relevant evidence. This however is only a small but a significant percentage of the eportfolios submitted, however the majority were submitted in a format, which allowed the moderator to easily find the evidence.

Assessors are making better use of the e-sheet to explain where evidence is located and how marks were awarded, and if the candidate worked independently this latter point is a requirement of the higher mark bands.

Lack of proof reading was still very evident throughout a high number of submitted portfolios with alarmingly many examples of evidence containing uncorrected errors. With the introduction of Quality of Written Communication to strand d it is important that candidates are recommended to proof read their work thoroughly.

Strand A – Upgrade

Those candidates' who obtained the higher grade bands provided clear screen shots and photographs' explaining through detailed commentaries what was happening and why it was being undertaken. Many candidates still did not include any evidence of relevant testing the upgrade or ensuring that the hardware components were, where appropriate, compatible with the original system.
Candidates wishing to gain marks in the higher grade bands should produce annotated evidence of a variety of tests undertaken, covering all aspects to cover the hardware and software upgrades. Testing of functionality and optimising the system are requirements at the higher mark band. Evidence showing real understanding of testing is more important than pages of similar test evidence. Candidates' did not always demonstrate standard ways of working notably safety precautions undertaken prior to and whilst performing the upgrade.
Again the most common upgrades were the installation of more RAM or a larger Hard Disk or DVD|CD-ROM Drive and the installation of an anti virus package or service pack but even after comments in previous reports it was evident that a number of candidates still were not explaining what the rationales behind the upgrades were.

Strand B- On-screen Support Manual

It was pleasing to see that both candidates and assessors are becoming more aware of the different user categories the manual is aimed at, in mark band 2 the level of user is an ICT Technician and in mark band 3 the audience for the manual is someone who should be able to use the information provided without having to refer to others for assistance.
It was still evident that a minority of candidates failed to recognise the fact that the manual was to be viewed on screen and produced a product which needed the reader to continually scroll up and down and in some instances from side to side.

Strand C - Collaborative Working Tools

As stated in previous Principal Moderators Reports and the unit specification it is essential that candidates' who wish to gain marks in mark band 3 must have used a range (at least 3) well chosen examples which fully evaluate the key features of each of the four chosen tools. At this level they must be able to show that the chosen tools are totally suitable for particular tasks and fully describe the processes involved in setting up and using a particular tool. This was once again the major omission form the evidence presented for moderation.

Candidates were able to identify and describe the collaborative working tools listed in the specification (section 6.6) and centres have recognised that these are only some of the tools which could be used. There were once again major omissions from the evidence produced in that many candidates' failed to indicate significant points relating to the capabilities and limitations of the tools chosen. To enable the candidate to access the top of mark band 1 and move into mark band 2 the candidate must make some comparisons between the chosen collaborative tools. These omissions were not always reflected in the grading of this strand by centre assessors.

Strand D - Communication needs of a small business

The candidates are required to select a small to medium sized organisation carry out an investigation into its communications needs and then produce a report, in relatively simple and non-technical language, with justified recommendations for internet connectivity, security procedures, an internet policy and the use of email. Even after reinforcing and repeating the comments in previous Principal Moderators Report a number of centres are still allowing candidates to produce a generic report rather than undertake an investigation into communication needs of a specified small business.

It was pleasing to see that a large majority of candidates were able to produce recommendations for each of the above points, which is a requirement to reach the top of mark band 1.

Those candidates' who gained marks in mark band two produced sufficient detailed evidence of an SME's communication needs and were able to make detailed recommendations for all the required topics. At mark band three it is essential that the report includes some future-proofing elements with a full and detailed justification of the SME's communications needs.

Quality of Written Communication [QWC] is to be applied to this strand after the content mark has been determined by the assessor. The QWC is assessed and the mark is then adjusted, **within the band**, to give a final mark.

The following 'rules' apply.

The content mark cannot be **increased** on the basis of QWC.

If the content mark awarded is at the **bottom of a band**, the student's mark cannot be **reduced further**.

QWC should not be assessed elsewhere in the unit.

Grade Boundary January 2010

6956	Total	A	B	C	D	E
Raw Mark	60	46	40	34	28	23
UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40