Principal Moderator Feedback

Summer 2012

Applied GCE 6956

Unit 6 – Technical Support

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General comments

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 application of Quality of Written Communication to strand d, it is important that candidates are recommended to proof read their work thoroughly.

It was again pleasing to see that a high percentage of the eportfolios submitted were in a format which allowed the moderator to easily find the evidence. Centres are reminded that it is not the moderator's role to have to search through eportfolios and folders to find the relevant evidence; summative testing of the completed eportfolio would eliminate many of the problems that occur in locating the relevant evidence. As stated in previous Principal Moderator's Reports, eportfolios should be in a format that can be read in a browser and the files should link together.

Strand (a) – 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. However, despite comments made in previous reports, it was evident that a number of candidates still were not explaining what the rationales behind the upgrades were. Many candidates did not include any evidence of relevant testing the upgrade or ensuring that the hardware components were, where appropriate, compatible with the original system. 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.

Strand (b) - On-screen Support Manual

Whilst this strand in the main is reasonably well covered, it is important that candidates are 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.

The inclusion of step-by-step troubleshooting strategies for several potential problems was still weakly covered and unfortunately, a minority of candidates still failed to recognise the fact that the manual was to be produced in a format which would enable it to be viewed on screen. This is a requirement for marks at the top of mark band 1, which resulted in the reader having to continually scroll up and down and in some instances from side to side. These navigational problems and the lack of a realistic and

suitable maintenance schedule prevented many candidates from moving into mark band three.

Strand (c) - Collaborative Working Tools

Candidates were, in a large majority of eportfolios, able to identify and describe, at times somewhat briefly, four collaborative working tools. 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.

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 of (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 from the evidence presented for moderation.

Strand (d) - Communication needs of a small business

Even after reinforcing and repeating the comments in previous Principal Moderator's Reports, 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. This strand requires candidates to select a small to medium-sized organisation on which they will 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.
It was pleasing to see that a 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. There were, however, still centres giving high marks when one or more of the four major points were omitted.

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 was judged in this strand but the standard was in the main corresponding to the mark band awarded.

Grade Boundaries

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