



General Certificate of Education

Information and Communication Technology 6520

Unit 5 Information: Policy, Strategy and Systems

Report on the Examination

2008 examination – January series

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General Comments

The paper was generally well answered. There were very few instances where questions were either not attempted or misinterpreted, suggesting that candidates were familiar with both the specification content and question expectations. However, some candidates failed to recognise that every mark needs to be supported by a specific element in their answer. Often this is a mark given for adding further information to an idea that has been presented, consolidating their knowledge of the topic.

Question 1

Many candidates focussed too much on the hardware/software platforms and the quality of the testing process itself (despite the question saying that it had been 'thoroughly tested'), at the expense of the many additional possible reasons for its failure. This meant that there were fewer high scoring responses.

Question 2

Many candidates are familiar with these communication devices and gained full marks although some, even at the higher grades, have little knowledge.

Question 3

Some candidates struggled with the recall of terms and sensibly used alternative ways to describe the standards and gained credit accordingly.

Question 4

Many candidates responded well to the 'openness' of this question that allowed for the entire focus to be on either hardware or software issues. There were numerous examples of full mark answers. There was some sensible linking with the 'perfective' and 'adaptive' notions that earned credit, even though the question was not specifically directed at maintenance issues.

Question 5

Most candidates proved they were well versed in their understanding of interfaces, though there were a few who confused the topic with psychological issues in human computer interaction. Candidates do need to be reminded to read a question at least twice before attempting an answer, as they can often make too quick a judgement on what is actually being asked for which does not then gain them any credit. There were many good examples in addition to the established Menu, GUI and Command types, including voice recognition and on-line forms. Again, candidates must re-read the question before commencing their answer. Too many responses addressed 'disadvantages' when this was not asked for.

Question 6

Many answers were high scoring for part (a) of the question though some candidates had failed to realise that the stem mentioned charging for use and the question specifically asked for 'other' reasons. Candidates need to understand that logging activities are used more for positive outcomes rather than negative for e.g. providing information about network load, or facilitating sensible distribution of resources. Part (b) was generally well answered.

Question 7

Many candidates struggled with the concept of DataBase Management Systems (DBMS) and confused it with simply using a data base or normalisation concepts that are the topic of part (b). Part (b), however, was answered well. Almost invariably, any reference to the three principal levels of normalisation was complimented by a comprehensive definition of its meaning, and full marks were often awarded.

Question 8

Responses to this new style of testing the 'psychological factors' was encouraging. Many candidates scored full marks for the first part of the question offering a range of interesting objects to be included in the on-line form, in addition to the ones given.

Part (b) returned mixed responses. The better quality answers annotated the various objects and illustrated good understanding of the psychological factor. Weaker candidates still found it difficult to differentiate between psychological and physiological factors, and related the latter to their form design.

Question 9

Candidates seemed well prepared for this topic. There were many examples of the full cluster of three marks being awarded for each of the various software solutions that were offered, and a few examples of the maximum of twelve marks being reached. Marks, however, were not gained when responses offered two benefits at the expense of providing an explanation. There were some discussions on *limitations* of the methods. This was not asked for in the question and could not be credited.

Question 10

This question was generally well answered with many examples scoring high marks. There was a good understanding of its requirements and it does seem that candidates are now well familiar with the style of this type of question and their expectations of how to respond. However, there are still examples where candidates are clearly knowledgeable on the topic yet make no response to an entire bullet point - this may be indicative of failing to read the question enough times whilst making their responses.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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