



General Certificate of Secondary Education

**GCSE Applied Information and
Communication Technology
3851 (Double Award)**

3850/1 ICT Tools and Applications

Report on the Examination

2008 examination - June series

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Unit 1 – ICT Tools and Applications

Introduction

Full day Teacher Standardisation meetings were held in the Autumn; these meetings were not as well attended as hoped. Centres were issued with detailed marking guidance and provided with a specification support document. Those who attended the meetings and have applied the advice given in the specification support document and the marking guidance have benefitted from them and shown improvement within a number of areas within this unit. In addition to this, some centres arranged for a portfolio advisor visit to the centre and also have used the email support service regularly. This has resulted in an improvement in the assessment and understanding of this award by many centres, which is encouraging.

Moderators were pleased to note that many centres are now using the marking grid in addition to annotating the candidates' work. This practice is to be encouraged. Using the grids and annotating the work enabled moderators to see exactly where marks were being awarded which resulted in detailed feedback being given to centres.

Moderators were very concerned that a number of centres did not meet the published deadlines for submission of marks for portfolio work. Centres are reminded that if deadlines are not met there is a serious risk that candidates' results for that centre will not be published at the expected time. Centres are reminded that the three units which make up the specification are moderated and examined by different people, and so sending all candidates' work to one moderator will delay the moderation process.

In order to ensure the smooth running of the moderation process, centres are reminded to check that the portfolios are tied together loosely with a treasury tag through the top left-hand corner, and that each portfolio has the correct Candidate Record Form attached that has been signed by the candidate and the teacher. This is imperative as failure to do this will result in a candidate being awarded zero. The completed Centre Declaration Sheet must also be enclosed.

This is the sixth year that the unit has been moderated. The unit consists of five sections; report reviewing documents, production of documents, description and evaluation of documents, report/presentation on specialist software, and standard ways of working. Although these sections make up one unit, they are to be assessed as individual sections, and so marks allocated for section 1 cannot be awarded for section 3. Candidates must provide evidence for all five sections. If candidates easily use screen prints in any of the sections, it is expected that they are of a size that can be read easily.

Report Reviewing Documents

Candidates are required to produce a review of two business documents. It is a requirement that the original documents are included. Candidates who failed to submit the original documents were given the opportunity to provide them to the moderator. Candidates who failed to provide their original documents at this stage were subject to a negative adjustment to their marks.

The documents need to show the use of three software applications, which are to be highlighted by the candidate. To gain basic marks, the candidate will describe the content, layout and

purpose of the documents. To gain higher marks they will evaluate the documents and make suggestions for improvements.

Templates, such as letterheads, blank memos, blank fax covers, and blank invoices are not considered complete documents, and so are unacceptable. Ephemeral items such as lottery tickets, CD covers, T-Shirts or marketing gimmicks are not considered business documents. When choosing documents for review, candidates should be encouraged to select documents that will give them the scope to extend their discussion on the document. In addition to this it is recommended that candidates do not review documents of the same type. Often candidates will repeat the same discussion and are unable to attain the higher level marks. Two different documents showing evidence of different software applications provides candidates with greater opportunities for discussion. Describing two letters or two invoices only allows for the candidates to achieve half the marks within this section. Teachers should take the opportunity to discuss the importance of anonymising information in the event of personal documents being selected for review. Although names may be left in, it is recommended for security reasons that details such as bank account details and sort codes are deleted. However, when doing this, it is also important that the moderator is able to see what type of information was there prior to the anonymising. Deleting all details makes it difficult for the moderator to identify what is being discussed and the accuracy of the discussion.

Some centres provided a report format, which helps to structure the candidates' thoughts. Some of the headings, however, did not provide the candidate with the relevant direction to discuss fully what was required, for example, content, layout and purpose. Centres are advised to enclose any task sheets used by candidates in order to gain feedback from the moderator regarding the suitability for meeting the relevant criteria.

Some candidates reviewed more than two documents. Centres are encouraged not to enclose all these documents within the portfolio. The moderator will only assess the two that will ensure the candidate achieves the highest mark. Centres should do the same to ensure accuracy of marking.

Candidate produces a basic description of the content, layout and purpose of two business documents produced using at least a single software application (4 marks)

Candidates need to discuss the purpose and both the content and the layout of two documents. Most candidates were able to do this at a basic level. Candidates achieved these marks when they briefly described where the text and the graphics were positioned on the page and highlighted the features of the documents, for example the address, salutation and main body text. The purpose of the document, even at the basic level, must be accurate. Even where candidates had made a good attempt at this, but had not understood the purpose of that document, they cannot be awarded the mark. The purpose, at this level was usually generic, for example, '...the invoice is to tell the customer how much money they owe...'

Candidate produces a more detailed description of the content, layout and purpose of two business documents, produced using two software applications, and attempts an evaluation of the suitability for purpose of the collected documents (7 marks)

Candidates are expected to refer to the documents they are reviewing rather than discussing, in general terms, types of documents. Some candidates produced very detailed descriptions, demonstrating great observation and understanding of the document being reviewed. They referred to the style of document, the paper size and orientation, made reference to margins and used technical terminology, the language used, the way the document was written in relation to the audience, and details within the document. In order for candidates to achieve the detailed descriptions, it is required that both the content and the layout descriptions are detailed.

Candidates often concentrated on the layout and failed to further their description of the content. A candidate must provide a summary of the content, highlighting key pieces of information. Many candidates discussed the software through the use of brand names. Brand names are not accepted and candidates are encouraged to discuss the types of software used. Candidates tended to discuss the purpose of a document in general terms, for example 'The invoice is to inform the client how much they owe'. In order to achieve the detailed marks, candidates need to discuss the actual purpose of the document being reviewed, for example 'The invoice is to inform Mr X that he owes Company Y £50 and that he has to pay within 30 days.'

The majority of candidates managed to provide a simplistic evaluation of the documents, giving either one strength or weakness without any justification. Some candidates stated a strength or a weakness but did not provide an evaluation. Simply listing strengths or weaknesses does not achieve a mark. There must be a basic evaluation accompanying this.

Candidate produces a very detailed description of content, layout and purpose of business documents produced using three software applications and evaluates suitability for purpose of the collected documents (6 marks)

Candidates need to suggest a third software application used within the documents being reviewed and explain how this software enables the document to meet its purpose. Few candidates were able to give a detailed evaluation of the documents as they often lacked the reasoning as to 'why' something was a strength or a weakness in relation to the purpose of the document. Many candidates would simply say 'this helps it meet its purpose', or would state the purpose and say that it had been met. This is not sufficient. How has a document ensured that this has happened? What techniques have been used? These areas need to be discussed.

Candidate produces a very detailed and well-structured description of content, layout and purpose of documents produced using three software applications, and evaluates in detail their suitability for purpose, suggesting how they could be improved (4 marks)

Moderators were pleased to note that most candidates' reports showed evidence of different structure techniques. The majority of candidates used headings and paragraphs and bullets/numbering, some used an introduction and a conclusion to the report. On some occasions candidates provided an introduction, but failed to provide a conclusion. Where this occurs, candidates are unable to achieve the mark. Although good practice, contents pages are not awarded marks for structure of the report.

Many candidates were able to suggest improvements to the documents. This alone is not sufficient to achieve the marks. Candidates are required to justify the suggestions they make. Why would this improvement make the documents better? Or how would this improvement ensure that the document is made more suitable for its purpose? Without this type of explanation, marks cannot be awarded.

Production of Documents

Candidates generally performed better within this section than the others within the portfolio. Candidates are required to create three original documents. 'Original' relates to the content of the document, as well as its layout. Some centres provided candidates with the text for the documents. This is not acceptable practice. Similarly, candidates being provided text where they change key words is also not acceptable. Candidates are expected to know the difference between formal and informal text and be able to apply this to different situations, this is integral to this unit.

At least two of the documents need to demonstrate the integration of two software applications. At least one document needs to demonstrate the integration of three software applications. Candidates need to show that they can use ICT tools to search, select, and organise information. The documents produced need to be fit for purpose. At least three sources need to be evidenced.

Moderators were pleased to note that many candidates achieved well in this section with the correct evidence being provided to show complex integration. Many candidates produced three very good documents and provided all the evidence required for all aspects of the assessment criteria.

Incomplete items, such as:

- a letterhead
- a fax cover template (without details or body text)
- a memo template (without details or body text)
- a logo

cannot be credited with marks.

Centres are reminded that a database is not a document, but a report created by the database is.

In order not to disadvantage themselves, candidates need to produce three documents. If more than three documents are produced, the best three are to be selected, taking into account all aspects of the production including the evaluation. The centres are encouraged not to include these within the portfolio as it creates unnecessary work.

Candidate produces some documents, which demonstrate capability with one software application (5 marks)

The majority of candidates achieved these marks by producing two documents that showed a degree of capability in one software application, and with one document satisfying an accepted layout. It was pleasing to note that the advice from previous years had been taken and a variety of software applications were used showing a range of skills.

Candidate produces a range of documents which demonstrate good capability with two software applications, including effective use of ICT to search for, select and organise information from a range of sources (8 marks)

The majority of candidates provided a satisfactory range of documents which showed some degree of capability within two software applications. Evidence was generally heavily weighted towards Desktop Publishing and Word Processing. In order to achieve all marks for the demonstrating capability within the software applications, the documents produced must be of a quality suitable for the work place and demonstrate the skill outlined on page 16 of the specification.

Candidates who provided evidence of using ICT to search and select, provided appropriate and detailed screen prints showing the use of a search feature and evidence of the appropriate search criterion, which was entered into the correct field and was related to the content of the unit. There was evidence to show that the information generated had been used in some way in the unit. The moderators were pleased to note that there was an improvement in the quality of evidence provided for this criterion.

The majority of candidates were able to demonstrate the organisation of information, primarily through the use of a graph or table. Some examples were contrived in order to fit into the assessment criteria, rather than being fit for purpose.

Candidate demonstrates capability to integrate two software applications to produce documents, including searching, selecting and organising using ICT tools (5 marks)

Many candidates were successful in providing good, detailed evidence of the integration of two software applications to produce an effective document. Fewer candidates referred to copying and pasting applications which is a simplistic integration. Moderators observed that fewer candidates used Clipart, which does not show the integration of two software applications unless evidence is provided that it has been altered in some way. Most candidates who showed screen prints of a before and after shot of the image, with an image manipulation package, and then showed it being used within a document, were successful.

Evidence for the integration of a spreadsheet into a document (showing the use of formulas within the spreadsheet) and the integration of a mail merge, (showing that the fields within the document as well as the data table) was produced by many candidates. Centres are to be commended for ensuring the correct evidence was provided. Some candidates continue to print out all the mail merge documents. This is not necessary. The document with the mail merge fields, the database table and one example of a completed mail merge is sufficient evidence. On occasions the final mail merged document (with merged fields) was not produced by the candidates. This is therefore not a complete document. Centres should encourage candidates to complete the merge.

Candidate integrates three software applications to produce complex documents that are fit for purpose (7 marks)

Many candidates successfully showed the integration of three software applications within one document. See comments above for the ways in which this has improved. Some centres still appear to be uncertain about what evidence is required for complex integration. For further guidance on this please refer to the specification support document which can be downloaded from:

http://www.aqa.org.uk/qual/pdf/GCSE_APPLIED_ICT_SPEC_SUPP.PDF

To gain full credit, candidates must show that all three documents are fit for purpose, free from obvious spelling mistakes, and with correct capitalisation and accepted layouts used. Capitalisation and 'text speak' are problematic areas, hindering the ability to achieve full marks within this area.

Description and Evaluation of Documents

Moderators were pleased to note that there had been an improvement within this section on previous years. Candidates are required to show the development of the documents created through the use of annotation. These documents need to be evaluated and then compared with similar commercially produced documents. These documents are to be enclosed with the portfolio.

Less candidates this year produced a step-by-step guide as to how they created their documents. Moderators were pleased to note that many candidates began with a completed document and made suggestions as to how this could be improved. Most candidates attempted

to annotate their work, although some of the annotations lacked depth and were generally labels.

Candidate indicates clearly how the software features are used to meet the purposes of the documents produced (6 marks)

Some of the candidates confused the identification of software features with the identification of documents features. Although it is important for candidates to know the features that are required for a document, (the address, salutation, closure, main body text, etc), this is not assessed within this section. Those who identified the features of the software (use of bold, italics, tabs, text wrap, text boxes, and so on,) did so within a commentary or through thorough labelling of the documents. Few candidates were able to link these features with the purpose of the documents.

Candidate produces corrected and annotated drafts to show how the documents were developed (8 marks)

This section requires the annotation to be carried out on the actual documents created. Some candidates used sparse labels to highlight errors and omissions, but failed to show a document with the corrections made. They did not, therefore, achieve the marks for J1 and J2. Other candidates used detailed annotations to show how the documents were created. It is important to remember that creation of a document does not show errors and omissions corrected, nor the development of a document. It is expected that candidates produce the document with the written text and graphics and from this point develop it. It is unlikely that a candidate will not find any errors or omissions within their documents; however, in the event that this happens, candidates must state that they have checked for errors and the document must show that it is free from errors.

Where candidates use screen prints of their documents in which to text box annotate the documents, the screen prints should be of a size that is legible. If the moderator is unable to read what is there, it cannot be marked.

Candidate produces corrected and annotated drafts of documents and attempts a basic evaluation (4 marks)

Few candidates provided meaningful drafts that were annotated in detail to show development. Some candidates used the format for Section 1, reviewing documents, to write an evaluation on their own documents. This was a useful task for the candidates, however, the emphasis for this section is slightly different and many candidates omitted to evaluate the documents in relation to the purpose and audience. Some candidates produced simple statements stating that the documents were suitable for the purpose and the audience. This, on its own, is not sufficient and needs to have some justification as to why.

Candidate produces corrected and annotated drafts of documents and evaluates own documents by comparison with similar commercially produced documents (4 marks)

Many of the candidates attempted the identification of the similarities and differences of the documents produced with commercial documents. Many of the candidates were successful. The candidates found it difficult, however, to justify these by reference to the purpose and the audience. Some candidates discussed which documents were better. This is not what is required here. Some candidates described all the documents, but failed to compare them.

Report or presentation on organisations using a range of sensing and image manipulation software

Candidates need to describe 'CAD/CAM', 'sensing and control' and 'image manipulation' software, identifying 3 features of each software type. They need to describe how these are used in organisations and evaluate the impact they have had on businesses. Candidates can present this information as either a report or a presentation. The moderators were pleased to note that most candidates who produced a presentation provided supporting speakers' notes, which added to the detail provided. Although looking at other software types is a useful teaching and learning experience, it is not required for this section. Information regarding word processing, desktop publishing, databases and spreadsheets is not required and should not be enclosed.

Candidate describes two features of the use by organisations of CAD/CAM, sensing and control or image manipulation software (3 marks)

This section focuses on **one** of the types of specialist software. Some candidates simply listed the features of the software, rather than describing them. Simplistic bullet points are not sufficient. Candidates are required to describe two of the features of their chosen specialist software. If one of these features provides additional detail, an extra mark is awarded. Candidates who provided a description, rather than a list, were more successful in this section. In addition, candidates should describe the features of the specialist software type, rather than the tools of branded software which can differ from other software brands.

Candidate describes three main features and purposes of the use by organisations of CAD/CAM, sensing and control, and image manipulation software (4 marks)

Candidates need to describe one additional main feature for the software described in the first part of this section to achieve one mark.

As many candidates only focused on one specialist software type they were unable to achieve many marks within this area. Again, where candidates attempted to outline the features of the remaining two software types, they failed to describe them but listed the main features.

Candidate describes in detail three main features and purposes of organisations' use of CAD/CAM, sensing and control, and image manipulation software and evaluates briefly the impact on businesses of this use (3 marks)

The majority of candidates produced a good description of how one of the software types was used and evaluated its impact on business. However, in order to achieve these marks, all three of the software types need to be addressed.

Candidate describes in detail three main features and purposes of organisations' use of CAD/CAM, sensing and control, and image manipulation software and evaluates in detail the impact on business of this use (3 marks)

Although some candidates tended to list the impact as 'quicker...', 'cheaper...' rather than including any significant detail, moderators were pleased to note that the understanding of many candidates, as to how the introduction of specialist software impacted on a business or organisation, showed much more understanding. Many candidates showed that they had visited organisations and had seen the specialist software being used. Those who had been provided with this approach by centres, often did better in this section than those who had only researched from books or the Internet.

Standard Ways of Working

Candidates need to show that they can organise their work into effective files and directories. They need to show evidence of having regularly saved work and show an understanding of backing up their work. Candidates need to demonstrate an understanding of copyright issues. In addition candidates need to show that they have used at least three sources of information and checked to make sure that this information is accurate. Witness statements are not accepted. The sources must relate to the content of the unit.

Where candidates provided detailed screen prints for the directory structure for this unit, which showed the files within the folders, they achieved good marks. Moderators were pleased to see that many candidates showed their back up folder, with its contents, or provided a detailed account of how the school's network was backed up. Evidence for unit 2 and unit 3 folders and documents is not required and does not contribute towards the marks. Some candidates thought it acceptable to mention that they were aware of copyright and this would be sufficient to achieve the mark. Candidates are, however, required to show an awareness of the impact of copyright restrictions on their way of working. Just outlining the Copyright Designs and Patents Act does not show an understanding of personal impact.

Moderators were pleased to see that candidates appear to understand how this award expects information on the verification of information to be documented. This resulted in some improvement within this area. Some centres are still verifying information that is not related to this unit. This is not required and candidates will not achieve the marks for carrying out unrelated verification. Some candidates tried to verify a source by showing screen prints of websites. If candidates choose to do this, it is expected that they show the information being verified and not leave it to the assessor to try and discover. In these circumstances candidates need also to ensure that the screen prints do in fact show the same information rather than just a home page.

Conclusion

The feedback forms to centres this year continue to be very detailed in order to assist the centres for future development of this unit. Centres are reminded that ongoing support is available throughout the year. Centres requiring help in the interpretation of the specification or guidance on schemes of work or delivery should contact aqagcseappictpa@aqa.org.uk