

# Examiners' Report January 2007

Applied GCSE

## GCSE Applied ICT (5331)

## 5331: ICT Tools And applications January 2007

For this externally assessed unit for 2331 examiners continue to report improvements in candidates' responses to some tasks, such as searching a database and creating IF statements in a spreadsheet. But there is still concern that the **applied** nature of the examination is not fully understood and, once again, many candidates gained much more credit for the spreadsheet and database activities than for the other three activities. There is concern that where candidates appear to have been drilled in spreadsheet and database applications they have much less grasp of the importance of effective, quality presentation skills. Many posters were not fit for purpose, having poor use of white space and apparently only a little thought put in to the suitability of the fonts used. This poor presentation followed throughout Activities 3 and 5.

The scenario for the paper is a business, Smarts Leisure Park. Given the weighting of the assessment objectives in the specification, centres should expect candidates to be able to apply knowledge and understanding to business applications.

There continues to be an improvement in the use of graphics and importing text from data files. Generally, both lower and higher ability candidates are more successful if they copy and paste rather than attempting to key in text. When candidates are asked to "copy", that is what is expected. In these circumstances they are not expected to put facts, etc, into their own words. A significant number of apparently more able candidates did not gain full credit for the first activity by attempting to reword the facts given and introducing spelling and other errors.

Examiners continue to report a lack of attention to detail and awareness of target audience and fitness for purpose. Proof reading does not seem to occur as frequently as is desirable, with the result that many candidates miss "easy" marks through poor copying. There was a general improvement in capitalisation.

There were fewer instances of candidates submitting an "answer" to a "question" they hoped would be asked, although at least one instance of a poster presented as a two-page leaflet was seen.

The specification (page 15), "Developing business documents", reminds centres of the need to prepare candidates to be able to apply their skills. Given the number of comments in previous reports where candidates have made reports and leaflets look like posters, there was a surprising lack of clarity and sensible layout in many posters. *Candidates seem unwilling to use a pencil and paper during the examination.* Here, candidates were given the opportunity to sketch a design (which did not need to be submitted in this instance). They were also asked to annotate a slide printout. Many either omitted any annotation or wasted valuable time by showing differences using, for example, autoshapes on the original slide.

Candidates once again appear to have been guided to go as far in each activity as possible before moving on.

## Support Materials

The Smarts website was update in the autumn of 2006. For this series only, candidates were permitted to use either the old or new Smarts Leisure Park logo. There was an impression that some candidates had not seen the site and did not recognise that there are now different logos for different aspects of the park, eg the Teenz Club. With the fresh appearance of the updated site came a fresh appearance for the letterhead for the last activity. A significant number of candidates incorrectly attempted to move the contact details from the footer to the header area.

The Activity Booklet and Candidate Pack will not be updated but are still available and continue to provide sample activities and revision check-lists.

## Secure Environment

Examiners have reported fewer instances where there is a suspicion that candidates have not worked in a secure environment, although there are still instances where it would appear that a candidate is using a database table that has been used by another candidate.

The separate user area must be set up for each candidate sitting the examination. This user area must not be accessible to the candidate at any time other than during the examination and up to half an hour after the finish (printing time).

## Saving Work

Examiners are still concerned that candidates do not always save tasks on completion. This was particularly apparent this series when a number of centres experienced printing difficulties that required candidates to reprint tasks. Candidates were disadvantaged where they had not saved work. There have also been occasions in previous papers where candidates are required to make use of earlier tasks.

## Printing

There are still candidates failing to insert their details on documents before printing (note that it is acceptable in certain instances to add the task name after printing). Very often, when candidates have been instructed to give a screen shot, eg of a database table, to overcome this, the complete table is not visible and candidates cannot gain full credit. By far the most successful method is to copy and paste the table into a word processing document and then add a header. See the separate Instructions for Labelling which are also included with each ICE document (Instructions for the Conduct of the Examination). A problem still occurs when candidates submit printouts that contain another candidate's name.

There is an increased tendency for candidates to submit printouts for "later" spreadsheet tasks with no attempt at the task and only the header changed. For example some candidates stopped at SP3 but changed the header to SP4, SP5 and SP6 and printed out again. This will rarely gain credit as, if there are marks to be awarded for printing in a particular view or orientation, these will generally be available for earlier tasks.

## Practice for the Examination

Where candidates are encouraged to label tasks before printing and to save tasks in the classroom environment this should not be an issue in the examination. At least one full timed practice is recommended to help candidates appreciate the pressure of a long computer-based examination such as this.

## Submission of Work

Examiners report that the ordering of printouts within the cover sheet was again generally improved, although there continue to be candidates who put the tasks face down. For an examiner to be able to use the cover sheet efficiently, tasks should be face up.

Some examiners received work from centres more than a week after the first date in the examination window, with a note to say that various problems meant the examination could not be concluded during the exam window. Approval **must** be given by Edexcel for this. Edexcel will advise the examiner. If the examiner is not aware of any approval, candidates may not gain full credit, for example if they use a date outside the examination window on a letter.

## Data Files and Software

The ICE document states that centres should include with the scripts a note of the software used and details of centre-created files. Very few centres comply with the first requirement.

Centres must check the downloaded data files in good time to check that file formats are readable using the software available in the centre. Where files need to be created the Instructions to Centres must be followed. The .txt and .csv files are intended as the basis of reconstruction for spreadsheet and database files and, as instructed, should not be given to candidates without further formatting.

Data files for the June 2007 examination will be published on Edexcel Online on 23 April 2007.

## Activity 1 - Using DTP/Word Processing Software

Candidates were most successful in this activity if they did not attempt to fill the space on the page and only included what was asked for. They were also more successful if they copied and pasted the facts rather than re-keying. Where extra words were added effectiveness as a poster was lost, especially where the basic facts were turned into prose. The most common item not included was the SmartAparts deal. It appeared that candidates mistook the "Discount Entry to Smarts..." as this piece of information.

The instruction in the activity was to include the "company logo". It was expected that candidates would insert either the old or new Smarts Leisure Park logo to gain this mark. The Smarts Teenz Club logo was credited if appropriately included as a graphic. Candidates generally chose graphics that were related to the facts that they had included, but not always.

Candidates were expected to have read the introduction to the activity and to use some information given, eg that there was a discount for SmartAparts accommodation. It was also expected that candidates would highlight the most important information, ie that it was a swimming gala and the date and times. Examiners felt that some candidates did not gain credit here where they may have added colour to their poster, but printed in black and white, which may have reduced the effectiveness of the highlighting.

Graphics and logos were generally of an acceptable size with proportions retained. Examiners were looking for a balanced presentation. A minority of candidates attempted to achieve this by changing the proportion of their graphics. Candidates who added too much in the way of borders generally lost the credit for balance.

Very few candidates gain full credit for this activity, although the majority scored at least 7 out of 12 marks.

### Key Areas for Improvement

- create a pencil and paper design
- design and produce a sensible layout for a poster (and other documents)
- select appropriate facts from a list
- copy and paste items from one document to another
- select appropriate graphics
- format text to emphasise facts

## Activity 2 - Using Spreadsheet Software

The majority of candidates scored quite highly on the first three tasks. Some continued through SP4 and SP5. A significant number attempted SP6 but only a few appeared to have a grasp of experimenting with values, using the spreadsheet to answer the question "what ... if ...".

### Task SP1

Candidates were asked to enter a title in a given cell. There were also two formatting tasks - to make the heading bold/12pt and to format one cell without italics. The majority of candidates entered the title in the correct cell. Some entered "Entry Fees For ..." instead of "Entry Fees for ...". A minority did not format to 12pt. A smaller minority did not remove the italics from E6. Most retained it as bold. It appeared that some candidates re-keyed the column heading as spelling mistakes and incorrect capitals crept in.

### Task SP2

Candidates were instructed to enter values into two given cells and to format those values. The majority correctly entered the values in the correct cells but some did not then correctly format (to currency and % 2dp).

### Task SP3

A function had already been included in cell D7 and candidates were asked to replicate this down column D "for the other competitors". The majority of candidates appeared to do this successfully but many could not be credited because they produced the printout in data view, not formula view. The formula could not then be checked. Most candidates correctly entered the column heading "Fees Due" but some entered it in an inappropriate cell, not recognising that it should be on the same row as the other headings, and did not format it bold to match the other headings in the row.

Candidates were then asked to add the values in column D. Those who used the SUM function to add only the rows required (ie all competitors) gained full credit. Those who used autosum, and therefore included a blank row, gained one mark as did those who used a formula which added each cell (eg D7+D8+D9 ...).

Credit was also gained in this task for the use of formula view and for all data being visible, including the full title in A1. A large majority of candidates gained this final mark.

### Task SP4

Candidates were required to use an IF statement to show whether a discount on entry fees was due. Instruction in the question paper were quite specific, including the anticipated use of "Feb" in the criterion. A pleasing majority of candidates produced a correct statement. Some omitted the speech marks from Feb, which would generally produce an error message. Most who used a correct criterion then gave the correct messages. Candidates should always use the most efficient method. In this instance, Feb was already contained in the values in column B. It was not necessary to use a separate cell (eg E18) to insert Feb and then use the new cell within the IF criterion. Some candidates who correctly printed the required cells, A6:E16, did not gain credit for their IF statement where they had entered Feb in a cell below row 16 because this could not be seen on the printout. Candidates gained some credit for any working IF statement - some constructions continue to surprise examiners.

Although there was some improvement, many candidates did not print only the required cells. A surprising number failed to use the question mark in the label "Discount?".

#### Task SP5

Candidates who attempted the IF statement generally gave a correct criterion, either using B7="Feb" or E7="Yes". The calculation using an absolute cell reference caused some difficulty. Some candidates attempted to use the complete wording from the question paper as criterion and messages. The use of a blank cell continues to cause concern - many candidates are still entering BLANK as a message. The final mark in this task was for a SUM function, adding only the values for the competitors. Generally, higher ability candidates submitted this task and the majority of these recognised that they should add only the required cells, using a function in the correct cell.

#### Task SP6

This task needed candidates to think "what ... if ...". The total amount of discount had to be deducted from the total entry fees. The early entry discount fee then needed to be changed to produce the required total entry fees. Surprisingly, many candidates failed to gain the relatively simple mark for the cell label 'Final Total'.

A significant number managed to show values in D18 and F18 that produced £73.00 in F20 - but mysteriously the value of the early entry discount in many instances had not changed!

#### Key Areas for Improvement

- enter a title as given
- format text as required
- enter values
- format values
- use the SUM function to add values in a column
- customise autosum to add only required values
- show and print a spreadsheet table in formula view
- use the most efficient method
- use a correct criterion and messages in an IF statement
- print only required rows/columns
- use an absolute cell in a calculation and replicate
- create a blank cell with a message in an IF statement
- think "what ... if ..."
- experiment with changing values to produce a required result

### Activity 3 - Using Presentation Software

Candidates were asked to edit a presentation in line with a given storyboard. For this activity, candidates had to be willing to use a pen or pencil as they should appreciate that ICT activities involve design as well as practical use of the computer. Fewer candidates presented more printouts than were required.

#### Task MM1

The majority of candidates printed the first slide on one A4 sheet, but many failed to indicate any differences from the storyboard. Some candidates spent unnecessary time indicating the changes, perhaps using autosshapes, BEFORE printing.

Those making an attempt to show differences generally recognised that the logo and graphic were transposed - although some claimed the "wrong" logo was on the slide. A significant minority noticed the use of "the" instead of "our" in the heading. A small number identified the use of an ellipsis rather than a colon and dash within the text. The identification of two out of three of these gained full marks for this task - although for overall fitness for purpose in MM5 it was necessary for candidates to amend "the" to "our".

A significant minority claimed that the text given on slide 1 was incorrect as "it's not welcome information". A storyboard will only bear basic information.

#### Task MM2

Candidates who scored well in MM1 generally then edited slide 1 to gain full credit here. Some candidates did not present a separate printout for MM1 but instead made changes and indicated them on the final printout. Credit for MM1 could not be given at this stage.

#### Task MM3

Here candidates were required to rearrange events into correct time order. While a good number achieved this, there was an equal number who only changed the times and left the events in their original order. Candidates who attempted to re-key the facts generally introduced spelling errors.

Many were able to add the correct heading, although a minority copied the heading from slide 1. Although not penalised until MM5, more candidates than might have been expected failed to use right alignment for the heading and/or gave the heading in double line spacing.

#### Task MM4

The most successful candidates copied and pasted three facts from the FACTS file. Some candidates did not follow instructions and included four facts. Those who attempted to key the facts generally introduced typographical errors. A good majority inserted an appropriate graphic - although there was still inappropriate use of the London branch of the Onion café, local property and the SmartPhone.

#### Task MM5

Credit was gained in this task for consistency and fitness for purpose. There was a pleasing recognition that candidates had used appropriate fonts for the slides.



Candidates did not gain credit for consistency of font and style for headings where the heading on slide 2 was not formatted italic. The majority of candidates gained the second mark for consistency of the main text. Few candidates gained credit for fitness for purpose. Some of the issues were: inconsistent text boxes; use of bullets in text for slide 3; slides printed one to a page and not two to a page.

### Key Areas for Improvement

- identify differences between a slide and its storyboard
- indicate differences manually using pencil or pen
- show awareness of the basic nature of a storyboard
- edit slides by moving graphics
- edit text
- rearrange text
- add headings to a slide, correctly formatted, with consistent line spacing
- add a text box to a slide
- copy and paste text from a document to a slide
- add appropriate graphics
- maintain consistency throughout a presentation

### Activity 4 - Using Database Software

Candidates generally worked through the tasks in this activity until they reached the point where they could not continue, although some lower ability candidates persevered to DB7 with varying achievement. There are still candidates who present screen shots of tables rather than copying and pasting into a word processing document. For some this meant a loss of credit in DB1 as the examiner could not see the complete table. However, most instances of candidates not labelling documents occurred when they had copied DB1, DB3 and/or DB4 into a word processing document.

#### Task DB1

The majority of candidates correctly entered the new record. It was pleasing to see that most used a correct code (S) for Swimming and did not attempt to change the validation rule as has happened previously. Around two-thirds appeared to attempt to sort the table on the correct field. Some appeared to have made no attempt, but might have sorted on the (default sorted) Ref field. Some candidates sorted on the ActivityType field. Very few sorting on the correct field did not sort in ascending order. As mentioned above, some candidates did not gain full credit because the examiner could not see the complete table in a screen shot.

#### Task DB2

This task let many candidates down. Most gave a screen shot of the complete entry form for the ACTIVITY table, although some gave a screen shot of the design. Many gained the first two marks by using the wizard to create the form. But customisation of the form was disappointing and often non-existent. Examiners were looking in particular for field names that described the data being entered. Where a title was entered it needed to be on the form itself. Candidates were instructed to save the form as ACTIVE in the question paper. Although examiners ignored any deviation from ACTIVE seen in a title bar, credit was not given for a title here. There was little

evidence of any construct that helped the user, such as help messages, drop-down boxes or extra buttons.

### **DB3**

Candidates were asked to search for records of members with a date of birth after 17/03/1991. A good majority correctly searched and it was pleasing to see that only a few included the record for 17/03/1991. Most candidates used the required fields, although some gave them in an incorrect order.

Some candidates, generally those who had difficulty with the search criterion, showed the design of their search rather than the results.

### **Task DB4**

This task - a search/query on related tables - was successfully completed by most who attempted it, with correct fields used.

For DB3 and DB4 there was a minority who did not appear to use a search criterion and listed all records with selected fields.

### **Task DB5**

Candidates with a range of abilities attempted this task. Only a small minority printed in datasheet view. The majority correctly pasted a screen shot onto a word processing document. Candidates generally attempted to use field names as given - but many used an unnecessary space to show, for example, Mobile Phone, rather than MobilePhone. Some spelling errors were apparent, one of the most common being MobliePhone. Some candidates added a Ref/ID field, often an autonumber, which was not required. Most candidates used the correct data type.

There were fewer instances of cropped screen shots which did not show the complete design. Very many candidates appeared to cope well with the input mask. The majority gave a correct key field, with common errors as Ref/ID or MobilePhone.

### **DB6**

Many less able candidates were able to indicate some kind of relationship between the ENTRANT and TEAMMANAGER tables, although some attempted a relationship between other tables and a significant number simply showed the relationships already created.

As this task became a discriminator for the more able, these candidates were able to relate using the correct fields and to give a correct 1:many relationship.

### **DB7**

This task tested data entry into two empty tables, and the relationship created. Candidates only gained full credit if they showed the related field (ClubRef) once only. Many less able candidates, who had not correctly related the tables, showed fields from one table only. Proof reading seemed scarce, with common keying errors including 'Smart', 'Smartz', 'Teens' and 'Kate maddison'. There were other interesting, creative responses!

## Key Areas of Improvement

- enter a record into a table
- use a code for data entry
- sort on a given field
- copy and paste a table into a word processing document
- understand the importance of seeing a complete table
- customise a data entry form produced using a wizard
- retain a given title on a form
- search a table on given criteria
- show selected fields in the correct order in the results of a search
- search related tables
- create the structure of a table using
  - correct field names
  - an input mask
  - a correct key field
- create a relationship between 2 tables
- enforce referential relationship/show a correct 1:many relationship

## Activity 5 - Using Word Processing Software

### Task WP1

Responses to this activity were generally very disappointing with even the most able candidates apparently unable to produce a consistent business letter layout, correct spelling errors and to include the major essential components of the letter. Examiners report on a lack of attention to detail.

The majority retained the letterhead as given, although some candidates attempted to move the contact details from the footer to the header area. Candidates should recognise that businesses use a variety of formats. This format was designed to reflect the updated Smarts website.

Many candidates retained the recipient's details at the top right. Some who correctly moved them to the left then changed the name from "Alun" to "Alan" or followed the spell-checker and changed "Heol" to "Hotel". Even more candidates inserted a date that included an incorrect year - generally 2006. There were widely differing formats for the date - most of which were accepted - except, for example, 12<sup>th</sup> of January. Candidates often left the date as simply month and year.

The activity was quite didactic, guiding candidates through the task, but many did not correctly replace "Hi Fellow Waterbabes" with a suitable salutation. Those that attempted this often experienced difficulty in giving an correct salutation, such as "Dear Alun", with "Dear Alun Edwards" frequently seen.

The inclusion and position of the subject of the letter was most disappointing - as did the wording itself. Many candidates are still unable to correctly copy "Smarts Teenz". The incidence of "Smartz Teens" was increased in this examination.

A reliance on a spell-checker caused difficulties for some candidates. As well as changing "Heol" to "Hotel", some changed it to "Hole", presumably at the suggestion of the spell-checker. Candidates were asked to find and correct four

spelling errors in the body of the letter. The majority corrected “swiming” to “swimming” and “you’s” to “you”. But only a few changed “two” to “to” (often substituting “too”) and even fewer changed “skiving lessons” to “skiing lessons”. A minority who attempted to correct “skiving” changed it to “sky-diving”.

Candidates were asked to put the correct date for the swimming gala into the body of the letter. Only a minority attempted this and, of these, many did not match the format of the date used at the top of the letter. Many incorrectly retained 17 “of” March.

While many removed “Keep ducking and diving”, candidates still have difficulty with “Yours sincerely”, with an upper case S frequently seen. Fewer candidates than might have been expected removed “Rick” and “The Smarts’ Office Guy”. Those who successfully deleted these details did generally manage to add Sian Zalick’s name and it was pleasing to see that more candidates realised the need to use information from earlier in the paper, giving Sian’s position as “Smarts Teenz Co-ordinator”. However, there was more than one instance of “Sian - The Smarts’ Office Woman”. Only a small minority of candidates indicated an enclosure to the letter, using an accepted method such as Enc or similar. A significant number incorrectly added a PS, often something such as “PS - Free drinks on the night”.

The original letter was given to candidates in a mixture of alignment, font and size. Very few candidates correctly presented a consistent format.

Examiners report that it was a rare event to give credit for overall fitness for purpose.

### Key Areas for Improvement

- use a letterhead as given
- recognise a number of different formats for letterheads
- correctly place recipient’s details
- add a correct date to a business letter
- use a correct salutation
- add a correct subject in an appropriate position
- use a spell-checker correctly and with caution
- use a correct complimentary closure and details of the signatory of a business letter
- use Enc to indicate the inclusion of another document, etc, with a letter
- consistently format alignment, font, font size and font style in a business letter
- consider the user and recipient to make a document fit for purpose

### Applied GCSE ICT Grade Boundaries

5331	Max Mark	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Raw	90	97	84	71	59	51	43	36	29
UMS	100	90	80	70	60	50	40	30	20