

Examiners' Report Summer 2007

GCSE

GCSE Business & Communication Systems (1504)

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1504/01 - 02 - Business & Communication Systems (Foundation and Higher)

General Comments

It was pleasing to note the continued improvement in the overall standard of candidates' ICT skills. Many performed well in both the Foundation and Higher papers and there was very little evidence of candidates running out of time, suggesting that they had organised themselves well. On the other hand, candidates do need to remember that it is vitally important that they read and follow all instructions with great care and take the time to check their work on completion.

Although the Principal Examiner's report from last year outlined the intention to utilise all areas of the specifications in the design of the papers, many candidates found it difficult to gain full marks because of a shortage of basic knowledge.

Once again centres are requested to encourage candidates to attach their printouts to the scripts with treasury tags or string. In some cases, printouts were not secured in any way and if there is no identification on the sheets, they can easily get misplaced.

Foundation Paper - 01

Comments About Individual Questions

Question 1 - Notice

Many candidates produced very pleasing and well-presented answers to this question. Most scored all the marks available for including the safety points and producing an appropriate heading. The main errors were using portrait instead of landscape layout and failing to check their work for spelling and capitalisation errors.

Question 2a - Memorandum

This question proved to be a problem for many candidates with disappointingly few having any appreciation of what to include in the layout of a memorandum. Most candidates included the information about Dental Charges using a table format - thus gaining 2 marks for this, but again the accuracy mark was forfeited in many cases.

Question 2b - Notice of Meeting and Agenda

A minority of candidates set out this question well and gained good marks. Most candidates were awarded one mark for including 'meeting' and 'agenda', but the layout and wording they used did not indicate a true understanding of what was being done. The marks available for including the agenda items in the correct order were gained in most cases, but the Date, Time and Venue of the meeting were omitted in a significant number of scripts.

Question 3a - Spreadsheet

It was pleasing to note that attempts at this question were generally better than those made at similar questions in previous papers. Those candidates who took the time to read the bullet point instructions carefully and check that they had complied with each of them, scored highly. A pleasing number of candidates overall were awarded the marks for 5 correct totals, although there was the perennial evidence of the use of calculators rather than spreadsheets to make the calculations.

Question 3b - Pie chart

All but a few candidates managed to create a pie chart, but comparatively few selected the required exploded format. More candidates than in previous years seemed to remember that a graph needs a title, but some failed to make this an appropriate one. Legends were mostly correct and percentages, when included, were always accurate.

Higher Paper - 02

Comments About Individual Questions

Question 1a - Spreadsheet

The number of candidates scoring highly on this question at this level was pleasing, with many following all the instructions with competence. Where marks were lost it was mainly due to failure to justify the columns correctly.

Question 1b - Pie chart

A pleasing response was seen to this question, with a significant number of candidates scoring in the higher mark range.

Question 2 - Letter

It was disappointing to see the letter, which remains such a basic form of business communication, so poorly attempted by many of the candidates who are sitting the Higher Tier paper. Failure to include a date and to use the fully blocked style with open punctuation throughout the letter, was rife. Also, demonstration of candidates' understanding of the rules for agreed salutation/complimentary close and signatory/designation was generally poor. On the other hand, in the case of the majority of candidates, the main body of the letter was well-composed and the required content was present and correct. It was a shame that so many let themselves down by their overall presentation.

Question 3a - Leaflet

The presentation of the leaflet was very pleasing, with many candidates producing high quality work and scoring good marks. Most managed a reasonable attempt at an A5 sized leaflet and included all the required items, though a failure to follow all the instructions with regard to the box and its contents cost marks in some cases.

Question 3b - Questionnaire

This question was also well-done. There were many very pleasing attempts at useable layouts with most candidates including all the required topics in their questions, as well as managing to insert the tick boxes. The only marks forfeited in general, were by some candidates producing very muddled questions and as usual, a failure on the part of many candidates to check the accuracy of their work.

1504/03 - 04 - Business & Communication Systems (Foundation and Higher)

General Comments

There was much evidence of centres having used the pre-reading effectively and used the issues flagged up there to prepare candidates.

Foundation paper - 03

Comments About Individual Questions

Question 1

1(a) The majority of candidates knew (i) VAT, (ii) debit card, (iv) salary and (vi) LAN. (iii) operating system and (v) organisation chart were the two questions which most candidates had problems with.

(b)(i) Very few incorrect answers.

(c)(i) This was well done with many candidates achieving 2 marks for knowing what a paper-based filing system was.

(ii) Many correct answers seen though surprisingly some candidates could not put names into alphabetical order.

(iii) Quite well done with most candidates talking about storage of information and the ability to find information.

(iv) Too many candidates answering with 'quick' and 'easy' with no clarification. However many candidates made reference to storage, saving space, the ability search quickly and make back ups.

Question 2

2(a)(i) The majority of candidates achieved 5 marks with the most common error being the incorrect order number. The other errors included omitting the date, mixing up product and code and signing Lucy's name instead of their own.

(ii) Many candidates talked about needing proof if there was a problem and generally alluded to good business practice. Not many candidates achieved full marks.

(iii) The majority of candidates did not understand a statement of account and confused this with a profit and loss account or a bank statement, talking about money in and out of their account and money remaining at the end of the month. There was also some repetition from 2(a) (ii).

2(b)(i) The concept of time rate was reasonably well done showing a clear understanding that payment is only made for hours actually worked. Some related this to shift work and the incentive of overtime.

(ii) Most candidates understood the principle of income tax but not all were clear regarding its use. Some thought it was money given to them or money used in the practice, whilst some just did not know what income tax was.

Foundation 1504/03 / Higher 1504/04

Question 3 / Question 1

3(a)(i)

1(a)(i) The main response to this question was password protection for different levels of access with some candidates mentioning having the information on one computer only. Some seemed to misread the question and discussed why not always how information could be restricted.

(ii) Not that well answered with candidates explaining how anti-virus software worked by stopping/deleting viruses but then failing to assess the effectiveness of the software. Using 'but' or 'because' would have helped candidates develop their answers. Some good answers were seen however where full marks were gained for demonstrating knowledge of anti-virus software, the need to update it and the implication if it is not installed.

(iii) It was clear some candidates struggled to fully understand what this question meant. Some discussed stolen equipment instead of concentrating on data. The most popular answers were to do with identity theft and fraud, patient confidentiality and the time needed to re-key data. Where there was mention of the DPA it was generally an awareness but not developed or explained.

(b)(i) Many candidates answered this question well developing their ideas and achieving 4-6 marks, though some merely listed methods with no development. Some candidates discussed how equipment could be tracked if it was stolen rather than concentrating on the preventative angle. Some did confuse data with equipment and gave password and encryption answers. Some methods offered which were totally unsuited to a small business.

(ii) Unfortunately many candidates failed to read the question properly and developed the idea of loss of patient information though told not to in the question. There were some good answers relating to reduced efficiency related to loss of financial records and the implications of having to replace hardware and the need to re-key data. Too many candidates listed problems with no analysis or development.

Question 2

2(a) This question was very well answered in the main, with most candidates describing the problems of a manual filing system and making judgements on how it would effect the efficiency of Dovecotes. Many approached the question by explaining why they should use a computerised system rather than a manual one.

(b)(i) Most candidates gave good answers to the 'sort' and 'search' bits of the question and gave the examples asked for, but disappointingly few knew what the 'create a report' meant, with many talking about a written report. For those who did know about reports, it was evident they had used Access.

(ii) Many candidates achieved level 2 on this question by analysing the benefits of a database to Dovecotes, but few went on to make judgements. The weaker candidates tended to focus on the sort, search and report aspect of a database, repeating what they had said in (b)(i) above and did not analyse the benefits of these processes. Too many candidates are still answering with 'quick' and 'easy' with no clarification.

Question 3

3(a) Most candidates seemed to know what time rate was, but in the main got no further than applying this knowledge in a very basic way to Dovecotes. Many of them would have scored quite highly if they had been asked to discuss the differences between time rate, piece rate and commission and in fact frequently went off at a tangent to do this in great detail. An excellent example of not answering the question that was set. Those that did get level 3, coped quite well with giving reasons, but very few made judgements on why it was a good system for Dovecotes to use.

(b) Most candidates seemed to understand the concept of job sharing and went on to analyse the benefits. The majority found it easier to concentrate on the benefits for the dental nurses, finding the benefits to the practice more difficult to identify. However there were some good, thoughtful and sensible answers, showing sound knowledge, analysis and judgements.

1504/05 - Business & Communication Systems (Coursework)

General Comments

As usual ninety-nine per cent of the assignments seen were Communications assignments. However, there did seem to be an improvement in many cases in the way the work had been approached with a lot more centres making sure that the candidates were given access to the full range of assessment objectives. This was achieved in many cases by giving candidates the framework of a business report which usually ensured that they were given every opportunity to achieve all assessment objectives. Another result of this is that far more logical and comprehensive assignments were seen. It was also felt that the number of candidates gaining only a few marks was significantly lower than last year.

Once again most of the work seen was well presented with 100% use of ICT.

Annotation / Centre Admin

The biggest problem this year has been the authentication of coursework which takes moderators a great deal of time to sort out via E6 forms. Though many excellent examples of beautifully presented work with clear and helpful annotation were seen, there were other examples of total disorganisation on the part of candidates.

Whilst generally there are fewer problems there still remain the following:

- marks awarded on record sheets not annotated on work, and vice versa
- incorrect totalling of marks awarded
- incorrect transfer of marks from record sheet to OPTEMS - centres are reminded that it is their responsibility to inform Edexcel if marks are incorrect in any way
- annotation at the top or bottom of pages makes moderation very difficult so annotation at point of award would really help the process
- late submission of samples, which does hinder the moderation process
- top and bottom marked candidates not included in sample
- many candidates continuing to send work in plastic wallets or bulky folders/files which does slow the process of moderation - one plastic wallet or a treasury tag is acceptable.

Criteria Specific Comments

AO1 - Generally well completed, but as usual, there were many cases where AO1.2 had been awarded without the required named evidence - text without name and author, questionnaires/organisations without names, unnamed individuals and in an increasing number of cases, the evidence of a vast number of web sites but no other type of source. The use of an information log or sources included in the action plan would gain AO1.2, a bibliography is not sufficient as this is only one source - text. There is also a tendency to award AO1.9 for lists that are presented as comparisons with no development and AO1.7 for a description with no consideration.

AO2 - Many cases of marks being awarded for the multiple and plural criteria when the evidence had only been presented once. This disadvantaged many candidates

because they had presumably been told that the evidence they had submitted was sufficient when it was not. AO2.4 when dealing with legislation was frequently copied from textbooks with no application to the organisation concerned. AO2.7 requires candidates to do three things at least twice - strengths/limitations/decisions. The use of SWOT and PEST would achieve this but decisions also have to have been made. The use of a structure meant action planning was evident and appropriate.

AO3 - AO3.4, organise and use is frequently overlooked on basic low-level work. The award of AO3.7 without the relevant named sources and evidence of systematic gathering is still prevalent. More candidates are gaining 3.9 because they are using the business report format.

AO4 - Depth of understanding when discussing improvements and justifications was still often lacking but had been awarded. As in previous years, a lack of information gathered on which to base evaluative comments or indeed make recommendations or work of a purely descriptive nature limited access to both AO3 and AO4. Where there was a clear structure candidates' work followed a sequence which assisted the award of AO3 and AO4.

Grade Boundaries - June 2007

1504/01 - Foundation Tier

Grade	Max. Mark	C	D	E	F	G
Raw boundary mark	45	32	28	24	20	16

1504/02 - Higher Tier

Grade	Max. Mark	A*	A	B	C	D
Raw boundary mark	45	41	37	33	29	25

1504/03 - Foundation Tier

Grade	Max. Mark	C	D	E	F	G
Raw boundary mark	63	30	25	21	17	13

1504/04 - Higher Tier

Grade	Max. Mark	A*	A	B	C	D
Raw boundary mark	63	43	37	31	26	21

1504/05 - Coursework

Grade	Max. Mark	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Raw boundary mark	76	69	59	49	39	31	23	16	9

Notes

Maximum Mark (Raw): the mark corresponding to the sum total of the marks shown on the mark scheme.

Boundary mark: the minimum mark required by a candidate to qualify for a given grade.

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