Examiners' Report Summer 2009

GCSE

GCSE Business & Communication Systems (1504)

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

General Comments

It was pleasing to see that the overall standard of ICT skills shown by the candidates had been maintained in these papers. However, yet again it remained disappointing that, despite their ability with ICT, many candidates did not give themselves the opportunity to gain the full range of marks. This was mainly due to lack of attention to detail, especially in terms of failure to follow all instructions carefully and to check their work for accuracy errors. The purpose of the type of tasks used in this examination is to convey information and candidates should remember that accuracy in all respects is very important when undertaking this sort of work.

Centres are reminded that it is a requirement that a hard copy of the pre-prepared files **must be** included with the scripts when they are sent to the nominated examiner. This is to ensure that candidates are not unfairly penalised as a result of incorrect data entry in the pre-prepared files.

Centres are also reminded that the examination papers for this specification are written to a context. This can be downloaded from the edexcel.com website from October of the preceding year.

Despite mentioning in last year's report that candidates are expected to produce a printout not a screen shot pasted into Word for database and spreadsheet answers, instances of this were still seen. The resultant print quality was often poor and very small. This made it really difficult to read and mark the candidates' work.

Foundation Paper – 01

Comments about Individual Questions

Question 1 – Handout

This question was generally well answered. The instructions were carried out successfully in most cases, with candidates paying attention to procedures and detail. This resulted in many candidates presenting a clear and well-organised handout that gained them high marks.

Question 2a – Letter

The response to this question was generally very disappointing. Despite this format being used in previous papers, many candidates obviously did not understand what was required of them. Large numbers of candidates did not appear to know how a fully-blocked, open-punctuated letter should look and therefore failed to apply that knowledge to the standard letter format they were presented with. Evidence for this included not giving the name of the addressee, a failure to match the salutation and complimentary closes and punctuation used outside the main text of the letter. In many cases instructions regarding insertions had not been carried out and few candidates managed to identify and correct the two spelling errors that had been indicated.

Question 2b – Graph

Most candidates produced an accurate line graph with a key and appropriately labelled axes. However, many failed to gain the mark available for a title, because they had not thought carefully enough about what the graph was representing.

Question 3 – Database

Very few candidates failed to attempt this question and many gained the majority of the marks available. Most managed to make the required amendments, but a number failed to do the search. As in previous years, the main problem was inaccurate input of the data, which could have been avoided with careful checking. Also a significant number of candidates only produced one printout that reduced the number of marks available to them because of the amendments that had to be made throughout the question.

Higher Paper – 02

Comments About Individual Questions

Question 1 – Database

Most candidates scored high marks on this question at the higher level. In the main, instructions were followed carefully and accurate printouts produced at the correct points.

Question 2 – Poster

Overall the majority of candidates made a good attempt at this question resulting in some attractive and creative work. However, very few gained all the available marks, mainly due failing to follow all the instructions carefully enough. The main errors were failure to put the box or graphic alongside the relevant text, borders which were not decorative and/or did not surround the whole of the poster and headings which did not reflect the purpose of the poster – to prevent slips, trips and falls.

Question 3a – Order

Again, too many candidates let themselves down by failing to follow all the instructions they were given. For example, quite a large number included all the items given in the question instead of selecting the relevant ones and many did not include either item totals or a final total.

Question 3b – Memorandum

Most candidates managed to include the relevant information in this task and many used a memorandum format. However, it was surprising to note how many candidates did not appear to know what a memo should look like, with quite a large number using a letter layout.

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

General Comments

The context showed that a number of centres used the evidence in the pre-release material effectively preparing the candidates for issues that were raised. However, there were a number of topics that candidates had clearly not prepared themselves sufficiently to access the questions and gain the higher levels marks.

As mentioned in previous years, there are still too many candidates answering questions from a generic point of view and not applying their answers to the context. Candidates are not developing or expanding their answers, even when the question asks them to 'analyse', 'suggest', 'assess' and consequently they are not able to gain the higher levels.

The advice given last year has in some cases not been taken on board with regard to the marking of the scripts being online. To enable examiners to easily read the work once it has been scanned, candidates should only write in black ink, others colours do not scan very well and therefore makes the writing difficult to read. In addition it would also help if candidates did not write below the last dotted line provided for their answer, or in the side, top or bottom margins or on the blank pages in the answer book. Additional sheets must be used for any additional writing.

Foundation Paper – 03

Comments About Individual Questions

Question 1

1 (a) (i) Majority of candidates selected an order being the correct answer.

1 (a) (ii) Many candidates did not realise that Dear Sir and yours faithfully go together.

1 (a) (iii) A sort, was the popular answer from most candidates.

1 (a) (iv) Some candidates confused an action plan with an agenda.

1 (a) (v) Formula was the most popular answer for this question.

1 (a) (vi) Again there was confusion over overtime and flexitime with some candidates.

1 (b) (i) A number of candidates confused OCR and MICR.

1 (b) (ii) This was a popular answer as candidates realised that the other alternatives were output devices.

1 (b) (iii) The chain of command as in previous years is not understood and therefore, the path along which decisions and orders pass was not the most popular answer.

1 (b) (iv) Transparency was the answer but style sheet was also accepted as this is a term used in design of a presentation.

1 (c) (i) The question was well answered with candidates realising that emails are stored, sent or received. However, there were some very confused answers given here, often candidates referred to electronic mailbox as video conferencing. A number of candidates had read the stem of the question and realised that it was email that was being asked for.

1 (c) (ii) Although this question followed on from the previous one, candidates did tend to fall into the trap of commenting about quick, easy, simple without expanding their answers and therefore did not gain the marks available. However if they had expanded the reason for be quicker, easier etc then they would have gained the marks.

1 (c) (iii) The majority of candidates understood the benefits that video conferencing would bring to B & R Engineering Ltd, commenting on the reduction in travel, being able to see the person and discuss issues raised, time saved and much cheaper. However a number of candidates mentioned that it would be the most appropriate way of selling goods which was not quite correct.

Question 2

2 (a) (i) Many candidates answered this question well, because they simply listed the features of DTP, however if they had related it to the preparation of Health and Safety notices and using the program they could have gained the higher level marks.

2 (a) (ii) Candidates found this question quite difficult and did not understand why B & R Engineering Ltd would use presentations with regard to Health and Safety. Comments were made about reduction in accidents, but the concept of using a presentation to ensure that all members of staff are refreshed with the information, kept up to date, opportunity to ask question, check understanding etc was not mentioned.

2 (b) (i) This question was well answered by candidates and showed that they understood what a salary was.

2 (b) (ii) The majority of candidates understood that there are deductions from salaries and wages, however a number thought that VAT was taken out of your pay.

2 (b) (iii) Many candidates did not answer this question well. This was due mainly to them not understanding what BACS means.

2 (b) (iv) A number of candidates understood why people who work shifts receive additional payments. The common answer being that they had to work nights, which was not of their choosing.

Question 3

3 (a) (i) Candidates were asked to give two reasons why B & R Engineering Ltd employees receive training, a number of candidates gave several reasons and this meant that the best two reasons given were marked. However very few related the training back to on-the-job training. A number of candidates did not relate their

answer to B & R Engineering and tended to give their reasons relating to the employees themselves. There were a number of candidates that commented on the fact that the company had spent a great deal of money on the software and therefore wanted to ensure that the staff knew how to work it properly. Mention was also made that the software had come from America and therefore might not be understood by British employees.

3 (a) (ii) Comments made by most candidates related to the additional training giving the staff qualifications and experience that might help them in the future for getting another job. Other valid comments with regard safety of staff when using the equipment were made.

3 (b) For those candidates who understood fully the purpose of having a shift system at B & R Engineering Ltd gained marks, they understood the concept of keeping the machines working 24 hours a day and that as one shift finished another started. However there were a number of candidates who disagreed with the shift system and commented on how tired the staff would be working 24 hours and this would have a negative affect on the company. This would not be good for the company as tired staff would make mistakes etc.

Higher Paper – 04

Comments About Individual Questions

Question 1

1 (a) (i) Many candidates understood the importance of receiving training on the new software when using the machines so that they were fully conversant on how to use it, ensuring that productivity for B & R Engineering would not be affected. Many commented on how it would be improved and would enhance the production and quality of the products produced. On-the-job training was more effective because the software had been designed specifically for their company and would therefore not be relevant to any other company. Staff could ask questions and sort queries out.

1 (a) (ii) Similar to the foundation answers candidates understood the importance of employees receiving training so that they could have improved opportunities but also be much safer in the working environment.

1 (b) Some candidates did not fully understand the impact of a shift system on B & R Engineering, therefore making comments that were very generalised with regard to people not wanting to work, which was not what the question asked for. However some candidates commented on issues that the company would be able to work 24/7. Thus the equipment would be fully utilised and no time being wasted. This would make the company much more cost effective.

Question 2

2 (a) (i) Candidates were able to demonstrate their knowledge of using DTP as a means for preparing Health and Safety notices, giving examples of using text and pictures, easily saved and amended at any time, etc. A number of candidates related it back to Health and Safety and if the laws change then the notices would

have to be changed. Many candidates mentioned that in a factory notices are easily damaged and often need replacing.

2 (a) (ii) This question was quite well answered with candidates realising that it is difficult to get information across to people working in factories by talking to them, sending messages, etc therefore notices being the best method. However a number of candidates did not develop their comments to gain the higher level evaluative marks.

2 (b) (i) Candidates clearly demonstrated their knowledge between the tool makers who are paid a wage and the CNC operators who were paid by salary. However some candidates believed that a salary is paid once a year.

2 (b) (ii) Again as in foundation for those who understood what BACS actually does were able to gain marks by realising the safety aspect, the speed of transfer and time taken. There were a number of candidates that believed BACS decided the actual pay.

Question 3

3 (a) A large number of candidates did not read the question correctly, they justified both email and video conferencing, where the question distinctly asked for one or the other. Many candidates fully demonstrated their knowledge and applied the use of either email or video conferencing to B & R Engineering, however they did not analyse or evaluate their reasons which meant that they could not achieve the higher levels. Many candidates gave personal reasons for using either method which was not relevant.

3 (b) This question was well answered by a majority of candidates, they fully understood the importance of having good communication within a business and the implications if there is not. They understood that if there was good communication this would be beneficial to the company and would gain a good reputation, with the opposite for the company if there was poor communication, loss of orders, orders not being met etc.

Additional Comments

In general, candidates should be aware of the mark allocation for each question and the command words that are used in the question. Many candidates fail to gain the higher level marks because they have not developed their answer when the question specifically asks them to.

Also as mentioned in previous years if candidates can prepare or plan their answers this will help them to ensure that everything they want to comment on is included and they are able to offer sensible, well-planned and logical answers. In addition, to reiterate an earlier point, unless a question asks candidates to 'state', 'list', 'identify', 'give' or 'name', candidates would be expected to expand upon and apply their answers to the context.

GCSE Business & Communication Systems - 1504/05

General Comments

As in previous years, the vast majority of pieces moderated this year used the Communication title. A range of business contexts was seen and included coursework based on candidates' work experience and those schools and businesses to which they had access. A few centres had candidates who presented other titles from the specification although, in the main, these tended to be International centres.

There were few candidates that did not access all assessment objectives. This was best evidenced where centres had given their candidates a clear structure in which they could work and achieve. Whilst many candidates were still too reliant on text books, internet sites and handouts, the best candidates were those who had researched and studied real businesses to which they successfully applied the appropriate theory. Hardly any work was seen that had not made use of the centre's ICT facilities. Many candidates demonstrated a high level of competence in the use of software provided by the Microsoft Office suite.

Where adjustments were made to coursework, it would appear that this was primarily due to lack of a clear understanding of the assessment objectives and/or their related criteria as set out in the Record Sheet.

Authentication, Annotation and Centre Administration

It is pleasing to report that previous issues with authentication of candidates' work were less this year than in the past. A small number of centres are still not including the bottom and top marks when these are not indicated on the OPTEMS as part of the sample.

Annotation was generally well done and, when well done, was helpful to the moderation process. There remain a few centres who still do not annotate at the point of the evidence for that criterion, an Edexcel requirement. The number of centres who annotate either at the start of the coursework, the start of sections of the coursework or at the top of the page, has decreased. A few centres did not annotate coursework at all and, in such cases, the coursework is returned to the centre for annotation or, if insufficient time is available, the work is marked by the moderator and that mark entered into Edexcel systems.

The completion of Edexcel procedures relating to OPTEMS was generally sound although there were some cases where there was a mis-match between the mark recorded on the OPTEMS and the mark shown on the Record Sheet. A few centres did not send the top copy of the OPTEMS to Hellaby as instructed on the OPTEMS but, instead, included it with the sample. It is the yellow copy of the OPTEMS only that should be included with the sample.

There are still many centres who make use of plastic wallets when sending the sample to the moderator. It would be appreciated if this was not the case and samples were collated with the use of, say, treasury tags or similar devices. A few candidates still include all copies of completed questionnaires. This is not required. At most, a copy of the questionnaire and one completed questionnaire will always suffice. What is important is the interpretation, analysis, judgements and evaluation that comes from the data collected.

Criteria Specific Comments

Assessment Objective 1 – Knowledge and Understanding

The majority of candidates performed well against this AO although there are still many candidates whose work in all other respects is good who do not gain 1.2. This remains a surprise as the Record Sheet gives a clear indication of the four sources and clearly states that two are required. A number of candidates gave the names of their teacher as the person source and this is acceptable. Many candidates gave either the title of the text book they used or its author. It should be noted that both are required. One example of good practice was from those candidates who included this sort of detail in either their action plan or information log.

Many candidates are still not responding appropriately to the use of the word 'Consider' in 1.6 and 1.7. The word 'Consider' requires candidates to do more than just demonstrate their knowledge.

Candidates who were given 1.9, often erroneously, did not compare the lists they had presented. Demonstration of knowledge and understanding of two forms of communication cannot be given 1.9 unless there is a direct comparison.

Assessment Objective 2 – Application

It is in this AO that a number of criteria have a plural requirement, e.g. 2.7 which requires two strengths, two limitations and two decisions arising from those strengths and limitations. Some criteria in other AOs also have plurality. In the case of 2.7, it is the decisions that are either missing or, where there are decisions, they are not directly connected to the stated strengths and limitations.

In too many cases candidates were given 2.4 relating to legislation where the evidence was insufficient. Candidates must understand that this criterion requires them to consider legislation and this is not done by a simple statement of the terms of that legislation. Candidates are required to apply the legislation to the business or problem they are tackling. Too often, candidates appeared to be paraphrasing text books and possibly using cut-and-paste from internet sites. There were pieces where 2.4 was well-evidenced.

Assessment Objective 3 – Select and Analyse

The criteria 3.4 and 3.5 were often not given when there was plentiful evidence that candidates had met the requirements for each.

The criterion 3.6 includes the word 'Consider' and the word 'Alternatives'. For this criterion the alternatives must refer to methods of organisation, interpretation and analysis. There were a number of instances where it was given when 1.7 (consider alternatives in terms of knowledge and understanding) would have been more appropriate.

The criterion 3.7 is rarely seen because candidates do not clearly state the system they have used to gather their information. In this series, when it was seen, it was usually part of a good action plan.

Assessment Objective 4 – Evaluation

Most candidates were comfortable with 4.1-4.6 but 4.7-4.9 was generally not well done. Often this was because there was insufficient information in the piece to make evaluation possible. If candidates' work is more descriptive than analytical, the last three criteria in this AO will be very difficult to achieve.

Grade Boundaries - June 2009

1504/01 - Foundation Tier

Grade	Max. Mark	C	D	E	F	G
Raw boundary mark	45	28	25	22	19	16

1504/02 - Higher Tier

Grade	Max. Mark	A*	A	B	C	D
Raw boundary mark	45	40	36	32	28	25

1504/03 - Foundation Tier

Grade	Max. Mark	C	D	E	F	G
Raw boundary mark	63	21	18	15	13	11

1504/04 - Higher Tier

Grade	Max. Mark	A*	A	B	C	D
Raw boundary mark	63	39	33	27	22	17

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.