GCSE

Business and Communication Systems

OCR Report to Centres

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Overview

This was the second assessment period in which there were substantial numbers of candidates being entered and achieving grades for the qualification itself, as well as individual unit grades.

For unit A265 there was a good range of performance amongst the candidates – with almost all of the candidates able to offer responses to all of the questions set. As with last year, the six mark questions proved the most challenging with very few candidates able to offer a convincing analysis of each side of the issues which needed to be addressed in these questions. Centres wishing to improve the performance of their candidates in the future would be well advised to focus on improving their candidates' performance on such questions.

On unit A266 the candidates generally performed well and centres were able to provide suitable local or national contexts for their candidates to investigate. Centres are reminded of the 2000 word limit stated in the specification and the requirement that the submitted work should be that which was written under controlled conditions – copies of research evidence (for example, completed questionnaires) are not required. A minority of candidates again misinterpreted the document task and addressed the letter to the manager of the organisation rather than to the customers.

Unit A267 generated far fewer issues than in previous sessions. Most candidates were able to attempt all of the tasks in the time allowed and they almost always complied with the requirement to add their name/candidate number to all of their documents before printing. The use of a pre-formatted document for the extended response question has worked well. It clearly helps to ensure that the candidates provide answers to all of the parts of this question.

A265 Businesses and their Communication Systems

General Comments

This was the third year in which this unit has been assessed and numbers on the whole were similar to the entry for 2011.

Candidates were, in general, prepared for the examination. On the whole they attempted all of the questions, they generally offered relevant responses and had sufficient time to answer the questions set.

Some candidates are still failing to address the context of the question and thus did not gain marks – for example, if a question requires a candidate to describe the benefits to a business then no marks can be awarded if the response refers to the benefits to the customer or employee. Similarly care should be taken when reading the individual parts of a question as many candidates continued writing about, for example, data protection legislation – part (a) of the question when part (b) of the question required responses linked to consumer protection legislation.

On the 'six mark' questions, candidates are required to provide relevant analysis for Level 2 (3-4 marks) to be awarded. Few candidates were able to offer any analysis which allowed them to access these marks, generally making statements which were linked to, for example, increasing profits or saving the ozone layer. To gain marks in Level 2 candidates must explain in detail the rationale for the assertion made or balance their analysis of the benefits and drawbacks. For Level 3 marks to be awarded the candidates must offer a reasoned judgement based on their analysis of either the different alternatives from their comparison or the benefits and drawbacks discussed.

Comments on Individual Questions

1   (a)   Most candidates could identify at least four out of the five mistakes.

1   (b)   (i)   Most candidates gave two valid and different responses to this part of the question.

1   (b)   (ii)   Many candidates correctly discussed improving the company image but then wrongly discussed having to employ a new member of staff in order to check the letters.

1   (c)   Most candidates were able to gain Level 1 marks for this part of the question as their responses frequently included breadth of knowledge but not enough detail to gain higher level marks.

2   (a)   Nearly all of the candidates gave the correct device when responding to this part of the question.

2   (b)   (i)   Most candidates were able to access marks, giving differences between laptops and desktop computers.

2   (b)   (ii)   Few candidates gave valid reasons for the business to replace the desktops. Most candidates gave the benefit to the employee.

2 **(c)** **(i)** Nearly all of the candidates were able to give the correct device for this part of the question.

2 **(c)** **(ii)** Many of the candidates were able to give two valid points for this part of the question.

3 **(a)** **(i)** Nearly all of the candidates were able to highlight the correct response to this part of the question.

3 **(a)** **(ii)** Again, nearly all of the candidates were able to highlight the correct response to this part of the question.

3 **(b)** Nearly all of the candidates offered some knowledge of limited liability but few were able to give a benefit of this in the context of the question.

3 **(c)** Some candidates demonstrated an understanding of the difference between private and public limited companies but they were unable to link this to the context of the question and thus could not access all of the marks.

3 **(d)** Nearly all of the candidates gave a valid answer to this part of the question.

3 **(e)** Most candidates were able to argue one option over the other, but few were able to offer a convincing analysis of the reasons for their choice, with many not giving the reason for rejecting one of the choices. Most candidates who argued for the questionnaire stated that the business would get more customers' opinions without analysing what effect this would then have.

4 **(a)** **(i)** Nearly all of the candidates were able to highlight the correct response to this part of the question.

4 **(a)** **(ii)** Again, nearly all of the candidates were able to highlight the correct response to this part of the question.

4 **(b)** Most candidates were again able to argue one option over the other, but few were able to offer a convincing analysis of the reasons for their choice. Some candidates argued for both points without making a final decision and did not link their response to benefiting the business.

4 **(c)** **(i)** Few candidates offered different actions which the business could take in order to act responsibly, only expanding on the concept of recycling, thus not obtaining marks for this part of the question. Candidates who gained marks were able to discuss donations to charity, sponsorship of local teams and the ethical treatment of workers. However, duplication of actions did not gain marks.

4 **(c)** **(ii)** Nearly all of the candidates were able to offer a valid response to this part of the question.

5 **(a)** Many candidates were able to demonstrate a knowledge of the Data Protection Act but some then lost marks by only linking their answer to protecting the data in different ways rather than giving other actions which are required.

5 **(b)** Very few of the candidates gained marks for this part of the question choosing to continue to give ways in which customers' data is protected, as opposed to discussing the ways in which consumer protection legislation protects customers.

5 **(c)** Many candidates were able to demonstrate a knowledge of the requirements of the Health and Safety at Work Act but few were able to link their knowledge to the question set.

5 **(d)** Very few candidates had sufficient knowledge of employment legislation in order to achieve marks on this part of the question. Some candidates had a knowledge of the basic requirements, for example, discrimination and holiday pay but this was often insufficient to access marks on this part of the question.

6 **(a)** **(i)** Nearly all of the candidates were able to give a valid response to this part of the question.

6 **(a)** **(ii)** Again, nearly all of the candidates were able to suggest a valid reason for this part of the question.

6 **(a)** **(iii)** Nearly all of the candidates were able to give a reason why the password should not be left on paper.

6 **(b)** Nearly all of the candidates were able to allocate the correct security measure to the situation in this part of the question.

6 **(c)** Most candidates were able to give valid methods of physical security for the computer systems but some wrote about general security measures which were not sufficiently specific to the requirements of the question.

6 **(d)** Many candidates were able to discuss issues of backing up in a general context but few were able to apply this concept to the question set. Candidates could offer some valid points about storing backups remotely but became fixed on the fact that the data would be in Germany, suggesting that travel to fetch the data should the backups be required would be expensive.

A266 Developing Business Communication Systems

This was the third opportunity to undertake assessment of this unit. It was pleasing to see so many examples of good quality candidate work, in particular the documents produced for Task 2.

More candidates used the context of an estate agency rather than a local health care provider.

Most candidates provided evidence which was specific to the controlled assessment tasks. There were few instances this year of candidates including irrelevant material or multiple copies of questionnaires.

The administration of the controlled assessment submissions was generally of a high quality and centres are thanked for taking care to ensure that the marks submitted on the MS1 matched the mark awarded to the candidate on the Controlled Assessment Cover Sheet (and that this mark was correctly totalled). This resulted in very few instances of clerical error delaying the moderation process.

Centres generally entered their candidates for the correct component (A266/01 for the repository and A266/02 for postal submission). If centres wish to make their candidate work available to the moderator in an electronic format then the repository (entering candidates for A266/01) should be used.

For Task 1, the application of the assessment criteria by individual centres was generally good. Candidates were generally placed in the correct mark band but sometimes leniently where a mark towards the bottom of the band would have been appropriate. A candidate should be awarded a mark in the middle or lower end of a band unless the quality of work suggests that the band requirements have been convincingly met. There were some instances where candidates were placed in Band 2 for Tasks 1(a) and 1(b) when they had not offered descriptions but had instead offered lists of points. Task 1f was the part assessed most leniently; candidates should offer an overall assessment of the impact of the changes on the organisation in order to be awarded good marks.

For Task 2 centres are reminded that the intended audience for the document should be the stakeholder and not the owner/manager of the business. In order to obtain the highest marks the document should be of a near professional quality, virtually error free and be very convincing in communicating the proposals.

A267 ICT Skills for Business and Communication Systems

General Comments

Most candidates performed well on Task 1. Many candidates were able to print all the required evidence for this task. Many candidates printed their database in the required format and all the required information was fully displayed. Generally the candidates were able to create queries and reports. Most candidates were able to gain some marks for each question on Task 1; however, a significant number did not gain more than half marks on the letter tasks; and the quality of the letter varied between centres.

The majority of the candidates were able to produce a suitable poster.

A high proportion of the candidates had an understanding of the features of diary management software and were able to state some features. Few candidates were able to explain how these features were useful to Mrs Nash when organising her appointments. Many candidates were unable to evaluate the extent to which diary management software would be useful for Mrs Nash, however, many of them were able to gain some marks by stating advantages and disadvantages of diary management software.

The candidates' ability to complete all of the questions in the given time has improved again, with more candidates attempting all tasks.

A few candidates failed to show their name or candidate number as part of the printed document, so were unable to be awarded marks.

In general, the paper worked well. The vast majority of the candidates attempted most of the paper.

Comments on Individual Questions

Task 1

(a) **(i)** Many of the candidates were able to insert the data correctly. Few candidates failed to use capital letters in the correct places.

(a) **(ii)** Many of the candidates were generally able to delete a record in the database correctly.

(a) **(iii)** Most of the candidates were able to correctly edit details in the database. Few candidates misused capital letters or incorrectly edited the wrong record.

(a) **(iv)** The majority of the candidates were able to insert a new field in the correct location. Few candidates put the field in the incorrect location and were thus not awarded marks.

(a) **(v)** The vast majority of the candidates were able to insert the correct data into the correct records. Many candidates transcribed this information correctly; however, few of the candidates failed to show the full contents of the cell when printing.

(a) **(vi)** Few candidates were able to sort the database on the correct field in the correct order. Many of them sorted into ascending rather than descending order, but were

still awarded one mark for demonstrating the skill of sorting. The difference between descending and ascending is an aspect for review for a few centres.

(b) **(i)** Many candidates were able to create a query. Most of them were able to select the correct fields and search criteria. A few candidates failed to select the criteria but were still able to gain marks for selecting the correct fields as a part of their query. Few candidates did not sort the query.

(b) **(ii)** Most candidates were able to create a report of the query which they had created in the previous part of the task. A few candidates failed to name the report correctly, and some of them had failed to complete this part of the task.

(c) In general, the candidates did not do as well in completing and presenting the letter as in previous series. Although many of them used the letter template provided, some did not use the blocked style and open punctuation. In addition some of the candidates did not use the correct format for the date, this did vary from centre to centre.

Many candidates did not address the letter correctly. A few candidates used the <<greetingsline>> option, but this did not return the correct recipient as it addressed the letter to the pupil and not to the parent. The <<addressblock>> option did the same. It is recommended that centres teach their pupils to insert the fields manually, rather than to use these options.

Many candidates correctly signed the letter from Mrs Nash.

Most candidates transcribed the correct details into the letter.

A high proportion of the candidates were awarded one mark for tone and style. The use of opening and closing sentences was required to gain two marks.

Few candidates produced all of the evidence required for the merged and unmerged letter.

Task 2

(a) Many candidates produced very good posters, showing the ability to insert and crop images. Most of the candidates were able to insert all the required information. Not all of the candidates scored well on formatting, more use of DTP features could have been used. A few candidates failed to put their name or candidate number on the printed document.

(b) **(i)** Most of the candidates were able to state or describe a few features of diary management software, and many of them were then able to describe how these features were useful. A few candidates simply described advantages of the software and not features and, therefore, were not awarded marks.

(b) **(ii)** Many candidates were able to state advantages and disadvantages of diary management software; however, only a few of them were able to evaluate the extent to which diary management software would be useful for Mrs Nash.

Only a few candidates failed to attempt Task 2(b).