Version 1.0: 0708

ASSESSMENT and QUALIFICATIONS ALLIANCE

General Certificate of Secondary Education

GCSE Information and Communication Technology 3527 Short Course

Specification A

3527/F Foundation Tier

Report on the Examination

2008 examination - June series

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Set and published by the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance.

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General Comments

The standard of performance from the candidates in the written paper was similar to last year. As was stated last year, it must be remembered that in this syllabus, there are elements of the theory that are difficult to teach through the practical coursework and these may be best taught in separate theory lessons.

As in previous years, most of the paper appeared accessible to the majority of candidates, with nearly all scoring 20 marks or more. Considering the highest grade that can be awarded on the Foundation Tier is grade C, quite a few candidates scored very high marks on this paper. Unless these candidates scored badly in the AQA Set Assignment, entry at the higher tier should have been considered.

Questions 1 to 5 (Multiple Choice Questions)

Overall, these multiple choice questions were well answered with many candidates scoring highly on this introductory part of the paper.
Question 1 asked candidates to identify the most suitable software package to use for a given task, with a list of possible applications given at the start of the question.
In question 1(a), just over two thirds of candidates were able to identify a drawing package as the most suitable for the rotation of shapes.
In question 1(b), the vast majority of candidates were able to identify a word processing package as the most suitable for typing text into a novel.
In question 1(c), around two thirds of candidates were able to identify either a desk-top publishing or a web design package as the most suitable for using frames to position text and graphics on a page.
In question 1(d), most of the candidates were able to identify a spreadsheet package as the most suitable for the replication of cells.
In question 1(e), almost half of candidates were able to identify a database package as the most suitable for carrying out a complex search on two or more criteria.
In question 1(f), less than half of candidates were able to identify a modelling package as the most suitable for a simple flight simulation.
In question 2 the term hard copy did not seem familiar to the majority of candidates and only a third of them could identify that hard copy meant printed output.
In question 3 which was about the rights of data subjects, few candidates gave the correct answer with a large number of candidates thinking that the correct answer was that individuals data must never be passed on to others.
In question 4 more candidates were able to identify the responsibilities of data users but again many candidates thought that the correct answer to this part of the question was also that data must never be passed on to others by data users.
In question 5 just over half of the candidates were able to identify the logical operator not usually used in the construction of database queries.

Question 6

Most candidates had a good working understanding of the application of a DTP package. In part (a) of this question, a very high percentage of candidates gained at least one mark. In part (b), where candidates were asked to give additional possible features of a DTP package and reasons why these would be used, just under half of the candidates gained the full four marks.

Question 7

As might be expected, candidates did really well at choosing input, output and storage devices from a given list. In addition, three quarters of candidates were able to give an input device not in the list but surprisingly only around a third were able to name an output device not given in the list.

Question 8

Overall, the spreadsheet question was quite well answered and in part (a) majority of candidates could identify A14 as a cell, from a given list.
In parts (b) (i) and (ii) a high percentage of candidates could choose the correct cell formats from a given list.
Most candidates were able to identify a suitable graph in part (c), with the most common correct answers being pie and bar.
In part (d) only a few candidates were able to give an accurate formula for the cell D19. Some candidates tried to explain what was happening in the cell rather than give a mathematical formula.
In part (e), it was quite pleasing to see a number of candidates had experience of goal seek in "what if" situations but very few were able to expand their explanation to score both marks on this question.

Question 9

Over half of the candidates could identify a sensor in part (b) as a suitable input device. Less than half could correctly identify the terms data logging in part (a) and logging interval in part (c) was answered correctly by around a third.
However very few candidates seemed familiar with the term calibrate as the answer for part (d).

Question 10

The term on-line in part (a) was well understood by candidates and the majority gained the mark for this part of the question.
Similarly, part (b) was well answered and around three quarter of candidates gained at least one mark for this part of the question. The most common correct answers were a description of the buyer getting the goods cheaper and having access to a wider/worldwide market for a wide range of goods.

In part (c), quite a lot of candidates lost marks because they give disadvantages to the **customer of buying goods** rather than the **seller who was selling goods** on Interauc.
In part (d) over a third of candidates identified a suitable reason why Interauc would not allow some goods to be sold. The most common correct answer was the sale of illegal goods. Incorrect answers were often too vague to establish if what the candidate had suggested might not be allowed.

Question 11

Logo style questions have been a common feature in this paper over the years and candidates coped well with this change in context. Parts (a) and (b) were very well answered and many candidates scored full marks.
Part (c) was quite well answered, with majority of candidates gained at least one mark and just under half of the candidates scored the full 3 marks. Candidates came up with a number of different, correct variations that moved the robot along the given route.

Question 12

This question was not well answered by the vast majority of candidates and on the whole answers tended to be very vague. Where candidates gained marks, the explanations often contained clear examples of data or information or both.

Question 13

This question was reasonably well attempted by many of the candidates, as this is now a familiar style of question. Full marks were surprisingly few but the majority of candidates gained at least one mark. Candidates who did not score well on this question usually did one or more of the following: -

- They gave too few boxes (or similar) to fill in each part of the form
- They did not give enough fields to score well on this question (the page was left blank for the answer and the question was out of six marks – indicating the candidate needed to give at least six suitable fields)
- As in previous years, they gave some fields that were wrong/irrelevant e.g. National Insurance Number etc. Whilst this did not directly loose any marks, it did not gain marks.

Question 14

Two thirds of candidates could identify another field that had been coded in part (a) and say how many records were in the given database in part (b). However, only a few candidates could identify why the Property ID field was needed. This was little disappointing given the increasing use of databases in the coursework.
In part (d), the vast majority of candidates thought that data validation would ensure that the data entered into databases was **correct** rather than **sensible**.

In part (e) over half of candidates could identify Max people as a suitable field for a range check.
It was disappointing in part (f) that just over half of the candidates could not give even **one** suitable advantage of using a database compared to using manual methods. Answers tended to be very vague e.g. cheaper, faster and smaller, were common answers that gained no marks without further explanation.

Question 15

Part (a) of this question was well answered and the vast majority of candidates gained at least one mark for this part of the question.
It was a little disappointing that despite the use of a graphics package in the AQA set assignment, less than half the candidates could give another feature of a graphics package, not mentioned in part (a).

Question 16

The concept of password and what makes a good or bad password, was well understood by the vast majority of candidates and parts (a) and (b) were very well answered.
In part (c) a little under half of the candidates could give a sensible reason why the newspaper needed to use passwords.
Although candidates displayed a good understanding of software protection, in part (d), only a quarter were able to give even one physical method that could be used to make data on the newspaper computer system secure.

Question 17

As may have been expected, the term e-mail was well known to candidates and a majority could gain at least one mark for defining the term. Similarly part (b) was very well answered and a vast majority of candidates gained one or two marks for giving advantages of e-mail.
However, in part (c) a little under a half of the candidates could give a disadvantage of e-mail compared to post. The most common correct answer given by candidates was the inability to send physical objects such as parcels via e-mail.
Part (d) was the least well answered with under a quarter of candidates being able to give a suitable reason why people may still use the telephone to communicate.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the **Results Statistics** page of the AQA Website.