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ASSESSMENT and QUALIFICATIONS ALLIANCE

General Certificate of Secondary Education

Information and Communication Technology
3528 Short Course
Specification B

3528/F Foundation Tier

Report on the Examination
2007 examination - June series

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General

Most candidates attempted most of the questions on the paper. There were some excellent answers showing a good breadth and depth of knowledge at this level. Answers to the multiple choice and short answer questions met with significantly greater success than those questions requiring diagrams or more extended written answers. A very few candidates made too many or two few choices in the multiple choice questions, for example, candidates made three choices when only two were required, thus reducing the maximum number of marks that could be awarded for the question.

When answering the questions on the written papers, some candidates gave the answers 'quicker', 'cheaper', 'easier', ‘neater’, 'more powerful', 'makes fewer mistakes', 'it could breakdown, etc. without further qualification, and credit was not given for these simplistic answers. More successful candidates explained, what is 'quicker', why it is 'quicker', what are the consequences because 'it could breakdown', etc. in relation to the context of the question. In addition, one word answers were not usually awarded a mark when a short description or explanation was required. Similarly, no marks were given for repeating the question without elaboration, and vague, repetitive or inaccurate answers. Better answers related well to the context of the question, were detailed and accurate, used appropriate technical language, and had illustrative examples. Where marks could not be given for a weak explanation or a vague description which lacked technical accuracy, it was not uncommon for candidates to be awarded marks because they had given a good example. Diagrams were often poorly labelled and not well drawn.

The marking of the Foundation paper was computer based (e-marking). Whole written scripts are scanned and saved in electronic form, and each clip (subsection of a question) is marked separately. Each clip is marked in one of three categories: auto, general and expert. Auto marking is particularly appropriate for multiple choice questions; general marking for short answer questions and diagrams requiring a straight forward response; and expert marking for more complex and extended answers. At the end of the marking period an audit of the e-marking process was carried out to ensure its accuracy. As a result of the e-marking process, item level analysis of candidates’ responses is practical. The comments on specific questions are grounded in the judgement of the Principal Examiner; however, these are underpinned by reliable and accurate statistics.

Comments on specific questions:

Question 1

Most candidates answered most questions well. In 1cii, a significant minority of candidates were awarded no marks. Popular incorrect answers were a hyperlink and an e-mail address; that is, objects that are likely to be embedded in an e-mail rather than attached to it. Some candidates incorrectly referred to examples from 1ci and a few did not attempt the question.

Question 2

Most candidates answered most questions well. On most questions the majority were awarded full marks with the exception that on 2a most candidates were awarded one out of two marks: a popular correct answer was 'A number' accompanied by an incorrect answer. Popular incorrect answers were 'A website' and 'A word processor'. In 2c, most candidates answered incorrectly suggesting that they do not have a secure understanding of spreadsheet formula.

Question 3

Most candidates answered most questions well.

In 3 d, most candidates were not awarded full marks and this was often because answers were too brief or not expressed in ways which were sufficiently meaningful, for example, 'delivery'. Many candidates incorrectly believed that when an item that is delivered is faulty it is not possible to return it. Most candidates could have improved their answers by explaining, for example, why having to use a credit card could be a problem for a student.

Question 4

Most candidates answered most questions well. In 4ai a third of candidates could not correctly identify the description of a window, and in 4d a third of candidates incorrectly believed that an advantage of a PDA relative to a desktop computer was that the battery can be charged by connecting it to a computer.

Question 5

In 5a, most candidates did not answer correctly and in full. This suggests that candidates do not understand the basic ICT systems life cycle that is also the basis of the coursework. In 5b, many candidates were awarded a mark. The most popular incorrect choice was the first option. Most candidates answered question 5c correctly. In 5d, very few candidates achieved full marks with over half of candidates awarded no marks. Many candidates could not draw a diagram of a basic LAN topology and most drawings lacked sufficient clarity. Some candidates had three networked computers correctly linked to a box which was in the appropriate position for the file server but was incorrectly labelled 'LAN'. Some candidates did not include other hardware.

Question 6

Most candidates answered questions 6a and 6b correctly. In 6c, most candidates were awarded at least one mark with popular incorrect choices being the second and fifth options. Many candidates were awarded no marks in 6d. There were a wide range of creative suggestions for improvements many of which would not have improved the accuracy of the control system or were not clearly described. In 6e, many candidates knew that the purpose of a username and password are to prevent unauthorised access and a very few explained this well in the context of the question. Some candidates gave answers that were not sufficiently clear to be awarded a mark.

Question 7

Most candidates answered most questions well. In 7bii, over half of candidates answered incorrectly. Many candidates identified only one selected record which was insufficient for a mark.

Question 8

Most candidates answered most questions well

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade Boundaries and Cumulative Percentage grades are available on the **Results Statistics** page of the AQA Website