OCR
RECOGNISING ACHIEVEMENT

GCSE

Information & Communication Technology B

Reports on the Units

June 2010

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This report on the Examination provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding of the specification content, of the operation of the scheme of assessment and of the application of assessment criteria.

Reports should be read in conjunction with the published question papers and mark schemes for the Examination.

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GCSE Information and Communication Technology B (Short Course) (1095)

REPORTS ON THE UNITS

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General comments

Candidates following this course were guided to submit coursework based on ICT and the Environment.

Most Centres had followed the 2nd paragraph of 7.1, Marking Criteria for Internally Assessed Work on page 40 which states "each successive statement builds upon the previous statement and candidates must have completed the lower statement before they can be awarded the next mark range."

In general, the standard of marking and internal standardisation by Centres for Summer 2010 was of a high standard, although a few Centres still need to improve and should ask about OCR's free consultancy service.

Although a number of issues did arise:-

Annotation

Most Centres used the Front Cover Assessment Sheets giving the page numbers where evidence could be found. This helped with cross-referencing and aided the moderation process.

Some Centres gave extra annotation within the coursework portfolios, and this was greatly appreciated by the moderating team. Although annotation is not essential, its use is greatly appreciated and aids the moderation teams and is an example of best practice.

Arithmetic errors

A small number of Centres had different marks on the MS1 form to the mark on the Cover Sheet of the candidates work.

Before posting the coursework sample to moderators, Centres are reminded to double check that the mark on the MS1 is the same as the mark allocated to the candidate on the Front Cover of the coursework portfolios.

Marking criteria

A small number of Centres had not used the OCR published marking criteria on pages 40 – 43 of the approved specification. Centres should not make up their own mark schemes, as this could harm their candidates results.

Communication mark

Some Centres are being too generous and awarding full marks for all candidates.

Assessment Objective 1

Choosing and describing applications

Candidates performed well, the level of evidence for this section is getting better with every session.

Using hardware & using software

Again the level of evidence suggested some very good teaching and learning, most candidates reached the higher mark threshold.

Inputting data

Most candidates were in the 2/3 mark threshold. Candidates still need give more evidence as to how their designed system reduces the possibility of data errors. Although there is now evidence of this being put right.

System output

Candidates are now performing well in this section, and the level of evidence for this section was much improved for this session.

Assessment Objective 2

Analysis

This is an important aspect of coursework. Candidates who performed well here tended to perform well throughout the Unit. When done well, candidates maintained their focus and knew exactly what they were designing and why.

Design, implementation and testing

Centres should remember that the lower order marks relate to the Analysis and the candidates ability to identify and complete their ICT system.

Most candidates performed well, but to secure the highest marks candidates should annotate their own work giving reasons as to why changes have been made, why some designs have been retained and others discarded.

Some Centres were very generous in awarding marks for AO2b without any of the above evidence. These Centres often had their marks adjusted.

For full marks candidates need to produce evidence of critical thinking, testing and refinements.

Evaluation, application and effects

This was the weakest aspect of coursework. Candidates did not compare ICT with other methods, or justify when and why using ICT is more appropriate.

Documentation

This could be improved by stating who the User Guide is aimed at. That will then focus the candidates into the type and detail of guide needed. E.g. is it for the employee or customer.

Assessment Objective 3

A number of candidates did not attempt this AO. Those candidates, who did, attempted this in various ways. Some had tried to meet the criteria within other reports, whereas some gave this a discrete section within the coursework. Moderators reported that those Centres who tried the former found annotation more difficult to follow.

If candidates identified the person/people who would benefit from their system, then again this focuses the candidate to meet the marking criteria.

Assessment Objective 4

Again those candidates who scored well on "the use of ICT in the wider world" did so using a discrete section of coursework.

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General comments

Candidates following this course were advised to submit coursework based on the use of ICT and the Environment, although a significant minority used previous topics. These topics are still acceptable although it does not give candidates the best preparation for their final examination.

Centres are now aware of the 2nd paragraph of 7.1, Marking Criteria for Internally Assessed Work on page 40. "Each successive statement builds upon the previous statement and candidates must have completed the lower statement before they can be awarded the next mark range."

Annotation

Most Centres used the Assessment Sheets giving the page numbers where evidence could be found. This helped with cross-referencing and aided the moderation process.

Some Centres gave extra annotation within the coursework portfolios, and this was greatly appreciated by the moderating team. Some annotation or indication where tutors are allocating marks benefits both the candidate and the moderator.

Although annotation is not essential, its use is greatly appreciated and aids the moderation teams and is an example of best practice.

Arithmetic errors

A small number of Centres had different marks on the MS1 form and on the Cover Sheet of the candidates work.

Before posting the coursework sample to moderators, Centres are reminded to double check that the mark on the MS1 is the same as the mark allocated to the candidate on the Front Cover of the coursework portfolios.

Digital submission

Not many Centres submitted work digitally. Those submissions came in various forms, from candidates being filmed while they explained their work to Centres downloading candidates' portfolios to CD.

Submitting the same work for 2378 & 2379

Although it is possible for candidates to submit one portfolio for both 2378 & 2389, candidates **MUST** identify where the extension task begins.

The full portfolio can be assessed for the 2378 mark, but only the extension task can be assessed for the 2379 mark. Therefore it is possible for these candidates to get different marks for 2378 & 2379.

If the extension task is not clearly identified then the whole of the portfolio will be assessed as 2378 only.

Producing a working system

Moderators look for a complete working ICT system, and Centres should be encouraged to send in digital evidence of websites rather than paper based portfolios. It is becoming apparent that some Centres are producing more and more reports. Moderators look at work using the marking criteria not volume of work.

Assessment Objective 1

Choosing and describing applications

In the main candidates performed well. Although only a few candidates commented in detail on the benefits and drawbacks of a selection of different types of hardware and software that could have been used, for the 4/5 mark threshold.

Using hardware & using software

Again candidates performed well. Some candidates did not describe the benefits and drawbacks of their chosen hardware very well.

Inputting data & system output

Candidates linked these sections together and provided some excellent evidence.

Overall the performance at AO1 level was greatly improved from the summer session.

Assessment Objective 2

Analysis

Candidates who performed well here tended to perform well throughout the coursework. When done well, candidates maintained their focus and knew exactly what they were designing and why. Overall those candidates who scored highly had put in a lot of work into this section. Probably more than the 5 marks merited but candidates benefited in the final mark.

Design, implementation and testing

Most candidates performed well, but to secure the highest marks candidates should annotate their own work giving reasons as to why changes have been made, why some designs have been retained and others discarded.

Some Centres were very generous in awarding marks for AO2b without any of the above evidence. These Centres were more likely to fall outside of tolerance and have their marks adjusted.

Evaluation, application and effects

This was the weakest aspect of coursework. Candidates did not compare ICT with other methods, or justify when and why using ICT is more appropriate.

Documentation

Candidates performed well here, there was some good evidence of testing and refining user guides.

Assessment Objective 3

Candidates attempted this in various ways. Some tried to meet the criteria within other reports, whereas some gave this a discrete section within the coursework. Moderators reported that those Centres who tried the former not only found the annotation more difficult to follow, but in some cases the Centre had not given the candidate their full credit.

Candidates need to link their discussion of AO3 to their task, some are too generic to score in the top range. If candidates identified the person/people who would benefit from their system, then this focuses the candidate to meet the marking criteria.

Assessment Objective 4

Those candidates who scored well on "the use of ICT in the wider world" did so using a discrete section of coursework.

2380/01 Foundation Tier (Written Examination)

General Comments

The examination paper allowed candidates to demonstrate their ability in this subject, and the questions catered for a differentiation in the level of the candidate's ability. The levels of achievement in this examination were wide ranging, but only a few candidates achieved very high marks.

In general, candidates completed the paper in the time allocated, and answered it in a more competent manner than in the past.

Questions that were well answered included Q1, Q2d, and Q3b
Questions that were poorly answered included Q2c, Q3c, Q3d, Q4a, Q7b(i) and Q7b(ii)

Centres need to be aware that this examination is marked on-line and Centres need to stress to candidates the importance of ensuring their work is clearly legible and to keep their writing within the frame of the examination page. This is particularly important in questions such as Q1 and Q6 where the candidate needs to ensure that the lines are drawn clearly, preferably with a ruler, so that there is no ambiguity for the examiner when marking these questions.

Comments on Individual Questions

1   This question was generally very well answered. A few candidates lost marks for missing lines – they should check they have the correct number of lines. Marks were lost mostly for confusing the use of DTP, Presentation and Graphics software. Databases and Spreadsheets were often also confused.

2   (a)   Most candidates were unable to achieve the three marks available. The most common correct answer was email but some candidates were unable to supply three answers and many candidates did not answer the question in context of the company (Enviromax). These candidates provided answers related to their own experiences such as shopping, gaming and socialising.

(b)   Most candidates who achieved marks for this question gave keyboard and mouse but were unable to provide a third correct answer. Many candidates confused manual input devices with automated input devices (Q2(c)) and gave scanner as the third answer. A surprising, and concerning number of candidates provided output devices instead of input devices. It is anticipated that these candidates would have been suitably prepared for the examination.

(c)   Very few candidates achieved marks for this question. Many did not demonstrate knowledge of automated input devices. There was a minority of candidates who provided very good answers such as bar code reader, OCR and scanners.

(d)   Many candidates were able to achieve two marks for this question. Most gave the answer of printer and monitor (or equivalent). Again, a surprising and concerning number of candidates provided input devices instead of output devices.

3   (a)   There was a full range of marks awarded for this question, with most candidates gaining a maximum of two marks. Many candidates gained very few, if any marks, mainly due to providing vague references to the Internet being faster, quicker or easier without any further explanation. Some candidates believe that the Internet is free.

(b)   Most candidates were able to achieve at least one mark for this question. Many mentioned the use of a search engine by name, but some did not go on to mention typing in keyword(s)

(c)   This question was not particularly well answered. The minority of candidates, who gained marks for this question, were able to refer to the reliability of books. Although marks were awarded for those who referred to users preferring to use books, marks were not awarded for the lack of ICT capability or reliability of the Internet.

(d)   Many candidates did not read the question carefully enough. The question asked for resources that could be looked up. Many incorrect answers referred to asking other people.

4   (a)   This topic has been examined over several previous papers. However, the majority of candidates were unable to explain that a virus is a program, and therefore did not gain any marks for this question.

(b)   Many candidates were able to achieve one mark for this question, for installing /using a virus checker. Some candidates went on to gain a second mark, either a firewall or blocking websites. A very small minority were able to achieve all three marks. Candidates again referred to their own experiences, giving such answers as "don't go on dodgy websites". Other common errors included the use of back ups and passwords.

5   The majority of candidates scored one mark for mentioning recycling, or an equivalent answer, but were not able to clearly express a second way to get the full marks. Some answers were too vague to deserve any marks.

6   There was a wide range of marks awarded for this question, illustrating the range of knowledge and understanding of the topic of monitoring systems. This was included in the pre-release topics to be explored by the candidates prior to the examination. Common errors included those who did not know what the term 'calibrate' meant. Candidates also confused data logging and logging period.

7   (a)   The majority of candidates achieved the mark for this question, referring to saving energy. The few common errors included reference to size and weight of laptops.

(b)(i)   This question was not well answered. Those who did achieve a mark referred to saving time or costs by not having to travel. Only a very small minority achieved the second mark. Common errors included vague references to 'cheap' 'easy' and 'a fast way to communicate', as well as mentioning 'no need to travel' without the advantages of saving time or costs.

(b)(ii)   This question was not well answered. Many candidates did not demonstrate a knowledge of video conferencing, some referring to watching VHS videos. Other common errors included the cost of setting up and running video conferencing, and limitations regarding hardware and connection failures.

8   There was a full range of marks awarded for this question, with the majority of candidates gaining at least one mark.

9   There was a full range of marks awarded for this question. There were some very well designed data capture forms provided by some candidates. Other candidates appeared not to read the question carefully, and so did not achieve many marks. Some candidates did not produce on-line web forms, but produced web pages without any spaces for the input of responses. Many candidates did not achieve the marks for extra elements such as drop-down lists, and some of the extra questions were not appropriate for the purpose of the web capture form.

2380/02 Higher Tier (Written Examination)

General Comments

Candidates are answering some questions very well and show a complete understanding. However as in previous years some questions are not always interpreted correctly; single words such as "quicker, easier, faster" are still being offered instead of full answers. Some candidates are gaining full marks for some questions. Many candidates obtain marks for the core part of their response but do not complete the extension appropriately. A significant number of candidates demonstrated a lack of knowledge regarding technical details that formed part of the pre-release information, such as macros and human-computer interfaces. There was the perennial confusion between validation and verification as well as a lack of familiarity with the Data Protection Act.

A small number of candidates seemed to have been primed with the answers to January's paper and tried to find opportunities to use them, with little awareness of the context.

Comments on Individual Questions

Question No

1   Generally answered well, with a diminishing number of students answering with brand names.

2   Most students picked up 3 or 4 marks on this question, but some tended to confuse staff actions with computer settings.

3   Most students picked up two or three marks for a partial explanation of a macro, though many were fragments retrieved from notes based on weak definitions. Very few could apply their notes to give a clear example of where they would be useful to the company.

4a   Most of the correct responses were related to travel costs and time. Some candidates referred to video conferencing as a "face to face meeting" (!) and a worrying minority described a video recording of a conference being distributed as an email attachment.

4b   Answered reasonably well.

5a   Most candidates were able to name three ways of communicating but few could give clear examples of how they would be used. A number had not read the question regarding staff communicating with each other.

5b   Many candidates failed to distinguish between publishing and communicating, citing email as a means of publishing. One of the most common erroneous responses was reference to advertising on other people's websites.

5c   Most candidates received the mark for Web Address / URL but few went beyond that. Some misread the question, describing a typical review of a website, whilst several stated what they thought the company should say about their own website.

6a   The majority gave enough of a response for one mark. Misconceptions included telephone requests and applying to the information commissioner.

6b   Most referred to checking the applicant's identity, but few could go beyond that. A significant number merely repeated some of the DPA principles.

Question No

6c   This was not answered particularly well; a great deal of speculative fishing for marks where the answer should have been clearly taught by the centres.

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