GCSE

ICT B

Examiners' Reports

January 2011

1995/1095/R/11J

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General Certificate of Secondary Education

Information and Communication Technology B (1995)

General Certificate of Secondary Education (Short Course)

Information and Communication Technology B (1095)

EXAMINERS' REPORTS

2378 Coursework

General Comments

Candidates following this course were guided to submit coursework based on the use of ICT and the Environment, in line with the guidance provided at INSET. Although this is the penultimate January entry, most Centres chose one of the previous scenarios.

Many Centres had taken more notice 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.'

In general, the standard of marking and internal standardisation by Centres for January 2011 was of a high standard.

Annotation

Many 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. Some annotation or indication where assessors are allocating marks aids the moderation process. Although annotation is not essential, its use is greatly appreciated and is an example of best practice.

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 approaches with most candidates reaching the higher mark threshold.

Inputting Data

Many candidates were in the 2/3 mark threshold. Candidates still need to give more evidence as 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, Testing

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

Many 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 are still very generous in awarding marks for AO2b without any of the above evidence.

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 was more appropriate.

Documentation

This could be improved by stating who the User Guide is aimed at. That should then focus the candidates upon the type and detail of guide needed, e.g. it is either for the employee or customer.

AO3

A number of candidates did not attempt this assessment objective, candidates who did attempt this did so 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 focused the candidate to meet the marking criteria.

AO4

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

2379 Coursework Extension Task

General Comments

Candidates following this course were guided to submit coursework based on the use of ICT and the Environment. As this specification is coming to an end a significant number of Centres are choosing previous scenarios.

Centres had taken notice 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

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

Digital Submission

More Centres submitted work digitally this session. This is good practice for the new GCSE.

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.

Assessment Objective 1

Choosing and Describing Applications

Candidates generally 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.

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.

Design, Implementation, Testing

Many candidates performed well. 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.

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, there was some good evidence of testing and refining user guides.

AO3

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. Identifying the person/people who would benefit from their system helps the candidate to meet the marking criteria.

AO4

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, Q5, Q6(a) and Q6(b).
Questions that were poorly answered included Q2a, Q2b, Q4, Q6(c), Q6(d),Q7b, Q8 and Q9(b).

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 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 Databases and Spreadsheets.

2   **(a)**   Many candidates were unable to achieve the mark available. Many answers made reference to 'keeping safe from viruses' and 'to stop people from going on inappropriate sites' as reasons for restricting access to parts of a network. Others gave methods such as access levels but did not explain why access is restricted.

       (b)   Many candidates achieved low marks. Very few gained two marks. Many gave the answer 'password' but could not give a second correct answer.

3   There was a full range of marks awarded for this question, with many candidates gaining at least one mark. Popular correct answers include the use of social networking sites and instant messaging. Some candidates did not read the question carefully and gave 'a letter' as a correct answer.

4   The answers for this question were quite disappointing with no candidates achieving all six marks. Many candidates achieved three or four marks.

5   The majority of candidates scored two marks. There were some interesting representations of portrait and landscape orientations but a significant number of candidates did not understand the terms 'portrait' and 'landscape'.

6   **(a)**   Although the majority of candidates gave the correct answer, a significant number of candidates did not achieve the mark. In many cases this was due to confusion between fields and records.

(b) Although the majority of candidates gave the correct answer, a significant number of candidates did not achieve the mark. In many cases this was due to confusion between fields and records.

(c) The majority of candidates did not achieve the mark for this question. Common errors included 'Date of birth'

(d) Many candidates answered this question poorly. There was little evidence of confident understanding of what a primary key is and why it is needed in a database. A few candidates scored one mark for mentioning 'unique' but they did not elaborate or give an example from the database to illustrate their understanding further.

(e) This question was poorly answered. Only a few candidates recognised that the data had been ordered according to the date of birth field.

(f) This question was poorly answered with the majority of candidates achieving no marks. Less than 5% of all candidates scored the full three marks for this question. A common mistake was providing a description of databases but not giving uses of the database. Candidates need to be encouraged to think in terms of the context to show how the business may make use of its database.

(g) A full range of marks were achieved for this question. This type of question has appeared on numerous examination papers in the past.

Many candidates did not know what a data entry form was and simply reproduced the database as given in the question paper. However, of the candidates who did attempt the question correctly, there were some impressive forms designed – including drop down lists and radio buttons, carefully thought out entry spaces and layouts of the form. Instructions to users on how to complete forms were largely absent. Other candidates rushed through the question showing little thought or planning in their answers.

7 **(a)** The topic of this question has appeared on previous examination papers but candidates did not seem well prepared. Most candidates achieved two marks or less. There were few accurate definitions of what a virus is, how it behaves, or how a member's computer may be infected. Many candidates gave very vague definitions of viruses and how they infect computers. The question was asked from the members' point of view. Many candidates' answers were often not in context - they made reference to schools, travel agents and networks. Candidates are still writing that opening emails can result in viruses rather than opening attachments to emails or downloading.

(b) This question was not well answered. Those who did achieve a mark referred to the use of anti-virus software. Only a very small minority achieved the second mark. Some candidates gave trade names for anti-virus software which did not gain them any marks.

8 Given the fact that this type of question has appeared very often in previous examination papers, the marks gained by some candidates was often low. A full range of marks was obtained by the candidates but some 20% of the candidates achieved three or less marks.

9 **(a)** There was a full range of marks awarded for this question with very few candidates achieving all four marks. Most were able to gain one or two marks but then ran out of suitable answers for the rest of the marks.
(b) This question was poorly answered with only a very small minority of candidates achieving two or three marks.

2380/02 Higher Tier (Written Examination)

General Comments

Overall, candidates seemed to have an acceptable level of understanding, but a lack of knowledge of social networking. Often candidates failed to relate their answers to the company in the case study. Many did not have a basic knowledge and understanding of the workings of databases.

1   Brand names were used and candidates seemed unaware of what each type of software does.

2   Answers were poor, there was a limited knowledge of what each did, and very few candidates provided enough detail to be awarded a second mark.

3   The majority of candidates answered this question well.

4   Candidates completed this question well.

5   A lot of candidates still assumed a statistical analysis was what was wanted. This was not the only way they could answer the question and many candidates added some written analysis about what was best for the company.

6   Many candidates attempted to answer this, but very few gained more than 2 marks as they struggled to explain the differences between the two features.

7   **(a)**   Although a straight forward question, many candidates struggled to get more than half marks. The first point on the mark scheme was often given as 3 or 4 answers. Very few candidates gave answers such as the death of a person, name change or moved house.

    (b)   This question seemed to be answered from a general view point rather than from a company/charity that used ICT to target its members. Very few candidates got more than 2 out of 4 marks for this question.

8   **(a)**   Many candidates had not thought this question through, and many expected an email to be sent or a member of staff to check the inputting.

    (b)   Validation methods – a better understanding of what validation was compared to previous years, but little awareness of how it would affect Our Future's database.

    (c)   This had a significant number of candidates not attempting this question.

    (d)   Very few candidates were aware that validation methods were not suitable for surnames due to the wide range of spellings involved. Fewer candidates gained a mark for stating that members could be upset if their surname was spelt wrong.

    (e)   Many candidates were aware of the benefits of the drop down list and stated 'title' rather than 'member' of another organization. Fewer candidates gained a third mark for writing that a drop down list would reduce input/spelling errors. Many candidates seemed to think that the drop down list would be there to help them remember what titles could be used. However, some candidates still thought that postcode would be a useful field to use.

(f) Many candidates showed a poor understanding about what each section of the postcode means.

9 Answers were not specific, and seldom gained more than 3 marks.

10 **(a)** and **(b)** Answers showed little knowledge of what wireless technology is used to connect a digital device to a router. Many candidates, if able to gain 1 mark out of 3 for part B, did so by stating an unauthorized computer could be prevented from having access to the router by use of a firewall. Very few gained any more than 1 mark.

(c) This was answered well, with most candidates getting at least 2 out of 4 marks.

11 Very few candidates seemed to know what they should find on a blog, though many candidates left off 'Our Future' from their blog page design.

12 Many candidates had difficulty with the fourth point, writing that 'when an email is sent via a browser it is saved on the sender system' was true.