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INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

<p>Paper 0418/01 Written Paper 1</p>
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General comments

Overall the level of the paper was felt to be reasonable with the majority of candidates scoring between 40 and 65. There was some evidence of candidates scoring over 75 meaning that the higher end of the paper was accessible. There was little evidence of candidate scoring low marks. There were no apparent problems with timing. There were very few candidates leaving the last few questions as though they had run out of time.

The overall difficulty of the paper was about the same as last year (2004).

Many candidates did exceptionally well with set answers that closely matched the mark scheme. A wide range of marks was obtained, with obvious language difficulties but generally the paper was answered well by most candidates. Very few did not attempt all questions. Candidates have performed generally very well, most scoring in the 50s and 60s, some in the 70s and 40s and very few under 30. Some Centres had briefed the candidates very well.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

This was well answered. Part (e) gave a small number of candidates problems, with a few putting graph plotter rather than graphics tablet.

Question 2

This question was generally well answered, although there were a significant number of candidates who used ringing bar code reader, temperature sensor as their responses.

Question 3

This question was generally well answered.

Question 4

This question was generally well answered, with the majority of candidates getting at least two of the three correct answers.

Question 5

This question was reasonably well answered. A significant number of candidates did not include data handling but opted for desktop publishing.

Question 6

This question was reasonably well answered. A significant number of candidates were not specific about this and several had answers relating to 24/7 and others that are inappropriate for a science lesson.

Question 7

This question was usually well answered. Most candidates gained all 5 marks, a few confused left with right and others ended with PENUP.

Question 8

This question was either well answered or very poorly answered. Few candidates scored mid-range marks out of the 5 allocated to the parts of this question. Many candidates had been taught the elements of a spreadsheet and scored highly, but few had not and scored badly.

Question 9

Candidates usually scored well by giving a range of ways that the library could use the database. A few gave three identical ways. Only a few candidates scored no marks on this question.

Question 10

- (a) This part was poorly answered. Few candidates could adequately name the sensors used in this system. Many tried to describe the function of the sensor and there were many incorrect responses like light sensors which bore no relation to the question.
- (b) Few candidates scored more than 1 mark for this part of the question. Some could name the data item (or describe it sufficiently to obtain a mark), hardly any managed to mention the processor comparing the data with a preset or user input value. The third part of the process was very poorly completed, with little reference to the microprocessor controlling the process.

Question 11

- (a) This was usually badly answered. Very few gave answers that related to the scenario and most just gave standard answers about why computers are useful.
- (b) Most knew about verification but there were significant numbers who did not and guessed wildly instead.
- (c) A minority scored full marks. There was a lot of confusion. The most common mistakes were because they did not correctly know the terms for particular validation checks. They would often name a range check then describe a length check. Some mentioned check digits and then described a length check.
- (d) Most got the first three. Hardly any got text/alpha for telephone. Most thought it was numeric.

Question 12

- (a) This question was generally well answered.
- (b) This question was generally well answered.
- (c) A large number of candidates responded with "lost" rather than giving specific detail about damaged by ..., destroyed by ..., corrupted by with detail of the problem.

Question 13

This question was generally well done, although there were a number of candidates who still used vendor's product names rather than the generic names for types of software.

Question 14

- (a) Most gave modem. The better candidates knew what they do, but quite a lot simply repeated the question in various ways saying that you cannot connect to the internet without it.
- (b) This was generally well answered but some gave vague answers such as "expensive".

Question 15

This question was generally well answered, although there were a number of repeat answers for both the misuse and for the prevention. Few candidates attained all 6 marks on this question.

Question 16

The better Centres generally scored well with this and many candidates were full of good ideas that went beyond the maximum 5.

Question 17

Few candidates performed well on this question, many managed to obtain 1 or 2 marks but failed to give any depth or description to their explanations. Another useful discriminator.

<p>Paper 0418/02 Written Paper 2</p>
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General comments

It was pleasing to see a marked improvement in the performance of the candidates. On what is now regarded as the more difficult of the two papers, the majority of candidates scored well over half marks. Congratulations must go to the candidates and their teachers for all the hard work which must have been put in to achieve these results. There were language problems encountered by some candidates but generally the paper was answered well by most candidates.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

Virtually all candidates achieved full marks for this question.

Question 2

Very many candidates got both marks although there were occasional wrong answers where candidates chose floppy disc drive.

Question 3

The vast majority of candidates got both marks. An occasional wrong answer was 'libraries have more borrowers'.

Question 4

Again, most candidates gained full marks, although weaker candidates replaced MICR with magnetic stripe reader.

Question 5

Most candidates gained all four marks although some candidates seemed to think that 'faster cars are produced' was a valid answer.

Question 6

- (a) This was well answered by the majority of candidates.
- (b) Again well answered, although a number of candidates failed to get the technical language correct but compensated for this by giving a good definition.
- (c) Most candidates failed to get both marks. Those that gained one usually referred to reports. Answers were generally disappointing as candidates seemed to think that databases are used for only one thing – searching.
- (d) Usually well answered though weaker candidates confused this with Microsoft Access.
- (e) Many candidates confused technical and user documentation. Many also thought that a description of what each is would suffice instead of giving documentation *items*.

Question 7

Most candidates were able to score full marks on this question.

Question 8

- (a) Candidates generally got the correct answers of keyboard and bar code reader.
- (b) Most candidates did well but some failed to indicate which of the two was more accurate or provided quicker input.
- (c) Many candidates are still under the misapprehension that the personal details such as name are stored in the magnetic stripe.

Question 9

- (a) Many candidates gained both marks.
- (b) Weaker answers were provided to this question such as CDs being more expensive or more prone to damage. Some even thought that CDs transmit viruses.

Question 10

- (a) A number of candidates lost marks on this question by concentrating on the borrower. The question clearly refers to the details of the book appearing on the screen.
- (b) Most candidates gave user names or passwords.
- (c) Many candidates understood the requirement for this question and answered it well.
- (d) Many candidates misunderstood the question and gave answers relating to the benefits to the borrower instead of giving reasons why the *library* would want to use the system.
- (e) This was better answered but even here there are still a number of misconceptions. Many candidates referred to the need for access to the Internet or a modem in general terms without being specific to the user. The stem of the question makes it clear that the library already has access to email so having to gain access to it would not be a disadvantage.

Question 11

Candidates seemed to have a better understanding of expert systems and generally scored better than in previous years.

Question 12

Candidates often failed to gain full marks as they correctly identified the terms but failed to go on and describe what they meant.

Question 13

- (a) This was answered well by many candidates.
- (b) Most candidates just described the hardware required rather than giving a full description of video conferencing.
- (c) A number of candidates failed to read the question carefully and gave answers specific to the members of a conference rather than the benefits to the company.

Question 14

This was generally well answered although some candidates thought that the computer would be able to check the signature.

Question 15

On the whole this was well answered with candidates gaining a spread of marks. A number of candidates gave answers related to hacking and fraud but these were not accepted as credit card fraud can happen when shopping at supermarkets and stores.

<p>Paper 0418/03 Practical Test</p>

General comments

The general performance of candidates in this examination was good, with a large number of candidates performing well upon the paper. Many of these candidates scored high marks, although a full spread of marks was experienced, and the paper performed well.

The text files were written and checked in UK English. If candidates have machines with default windows settings to US English (or other similar settings) then some of the words would be identified as spelling errors. In these cases the spelling should not be corrected (although candidates have not been penalised if they did so).

Many candidates who performed very well on the more complex questions on the paper often made simple errors, which could have been avoided by carefully checking their work.

The vast majority of candidates completed the paper. Those candidates who did not, tended to be the weakest candidates who may not have had the practical skills and underlying knowledge to attempt the questions rather than a lack of time.

There were a number of issues with capitalisation. Candidates must ensure that capitalisation matches that prescribed in the question paper.

Comments on specific questions

Communication

This section was well completed by the majority of candidates. The candidates generally provided good evidence of the required skills, but some problems were due to the candidates/Centres choice of software. In these cases the name of the attached file was not visible. Candidates were instructed to attach the file they had downloaded from the website. This was SWA5MOB.TXT. Other files or file names were not accepted. A number of candidates renamed the required files to things like SWA5MOB1.txt, SWANMOB.csv, SWA5MOB.txt.doc, or SWA5MOB.MDB (for SAW5MOB.CSV), and other more remote names like IGCSE TEST.DOC, or the first line of text.DOC. Where these constituted the attached file to the e-mail (for example) it was impossible to verify if these were the correct documents. Candidates were therefore penalised for these errors.

Document production

The general standard of work in this section was very good. The most common errors were in setting the page size and/or the margin settings. A significant number of candidates failed to set these correctly. The next most significant error involved the failure to indent the bulleted list in step 16. A number of candidates moved the bulleted list, but not by 'at least 3 centimetres' as specified in the paper. Errors concerning text alignment, font size, line spacing were sometimes seen. On occasion candidates failed to apply fonts, styles or spacing to all of the paragraphs.

Candidates who had used the spell check facility with US settings which had changed the spelling of the title Phoney to Phony were not penalised by the Examiners if it was also changed in body text.

Data manipulation

This section of the paper proved the most taxing for the candidates. There were errors found in all of the extracts which included the failure to show field labels in full, and also occasionally the data itself. Omission of a field in the first extract meant that data entry could not be checked, losing one mark for each record to be added.

Sometimes field labels and the related data were mismatched within the printed reports, especially from those candidates who had made adjustments to the report structure, when using Microsoft Access.

Some candidates (who appeared to be using Microsoft Excel) had sorted the data on a single field, but did not apply the sort to all the columns, which meant that the integrity of the data was lost. For some candidates this also had an effect on subsequent data manipulation questions.

Several candidates using spreadsheet software appeared to find the triple criteria search in step 27 quite difficult. Some candidates appear to have resorted to copying and pasting records that met the criteria, or typing in the records they thought should appear, with the consequent risk of errors. Those candidates using a database package did not seem to encounter these problems.

Some candidates imported the field headings into the database table, and they either left the default field headings as Field1 etc., or entered their own field headings, again with risk of spelling error e.g. lenght, stanby, etc.

All candidates were instructed to "make sure that your name, Centre number and candidate number are printed on each printout that you are asked to produce". A significant number of candidates did not follow this instruction and if the names on reports were omitted, lost all marks for the skills seen in the report. Names were sometimes incorrectly aligned left/right below the report in steps 23 and 25.

The average calculation was generally well done and placed correctly. If the selection was incorrect, allowance was made for an average figure based on the records selected. Sometimes the calculated field was misplaced in the report.

Integration

Margin settings again provided the greatest problems to candidates, with a significant number failing to correctly amend the page size and/or margin settings.

The table was generally inserted in the right place although there were a number of accuracy errors in the text added to the table. 100% accuracy was expected for text entry, and several candidates failed to attain this.

For whatever reasons, some candidates did not insert the database extract into the document, losing all the marks associated with this activity. Credit was given for skills demonstrated if a named printout of this extract was included independently of the document.

There were a number of errors introduced in line spacing between paragraphs and a small number of candidates failed to insert page breaks to ensure that there were no split lists or tables.

<p>Paper 0418/04 Practical Test</p>

General comments

The majority of candidates completed all elements of the paper. There were vast differences in the range of results from Centre to Centre. There has been a general improvement in the standard of candidate entries this year. Many Centres have addressed the areas of weakness from previous sessions. For a significant number of candidates the website authoring section of the paper was their strongest element, which is in direct contrast to all previous results on this paper. In other Centres the website authoring section caused the most significant problems, with some candidates omitting this section completely.

A number of candidates failed to print out the html code for the website authoring, or the formulae for the data handling. In both cases it was impossible to award many marks to the candidates without the evidence of their structure and syntax.

A number of candidates submitted work which did not have their names printed on each document (or task), some scripts contained hand written names on the sheets despite the clear instructions on the front of the question paper. It is not possible to verify that this work is that belonging to the individual candidates.

Comments on specific questions

Data Analysis

Question 1

Some candidates failed to set up the data model as specified in the question paper.

Question 3

Some candidates attempted to do this without using named cells *five* and *three*. A small number of candidates experienced problems with the mathematical operators for greater than or equal to. The IF function did cause problems for some candidates, a number of candidates used <300 as an alternative but then failed to multiply by the correct cell name, therefore achieving an incorrect result.

Question 6

A number of candidates introduced errors in the COUNTIF formulae, some with the range of cells selected, some with the value (or cell reference) to compare with, and others with the syntax of the COUNTIF function.

Question 7

This question was generally done very well, although some candidates had incorrect data entry which ensured that the spreadsheet did not accept the values in date format.

Question 8

Several candidates did not format all the specified columns. Some formatted only two of the three columns. A more significant number formatted the three columns but omitted certain cells or rows. A small number of candidates set the cells to currency but with 0 decimal places.

Question 10

A small number of candidates did not change the page orientation.

Question 11

This question was usually done well, but occasionally candidates would fail to resize the columns, resulting in the formulae being partially hidden. A small number of candidates did not demonstrate the ability to switch between the value setting and formulae setting within the spreadsheet. Almost all of the candidates managed to get the sheet onto a single page.

Question 12

There were a number of data entry errors, particularly related to the spelling of *February*, *espresso* and *Vacuum*. The numeric data entry was usually correct.

Question 14

A number of candidates could not filter the data from the given criterion. Some candidates attempted to delete the rows rather than searching/filtering for the correct data.

Question 15

A more significant number of candidates could not filter the data using the two given criteria. Again, some candidates attempted to delete the rows rather than searching/filtering for the correct data.

Website Authoring

Question 2

A number of candidates did not create an external stylesheet. There were a number of small web pages saved in html format with the styles included, which should have been saved as cascading stylesheets (in.css format). There was a wide diversity of 'font-size' settings in the stylesheet, many which had no units attached to them so would not work in many web browsers. The most common mistakes were using the incorrect syntax on the 'font-family', and missing the units from 'font-size'.

Question 4

Many candidates created the homepage correctly, with all of the items in the correct position and the heading styles (h1 h2 and h3) applied to the correct text. The table was usually created with the correct number of rows and columns, and with the border set to 3 point. The text excerpts and image were usually correctly positioned in the table, but in some candidates printouts the image was not fully visible.

Question 7

A significant number of candidates did not open the file in a new target window called EXTERNAL, many used the default settings of their web authoring package and had not edited this in the html code. Some candidates set the title of the page to EXTERNAL. One or two candidates set the default window setting to open in the EXTERNAL window.

Question 10

A small number of candidates failed to set the table border to 3 points.

Question 11

A small number of candidates found the placing of all the elements in the correct table cells difficult, of those who did several forgot to apply the styles from the stylesheet.

Question 13

A small number of candidates created frames, but when printing out the web page only printed out the main frame, forgetting to print the sections for the menu choices and the title. Some candidates failed to produce the html printout as well as the copy from the browser view. Most of the candidates had no trouble attaching the stylesheet, however, sometimes the styles would be overridden by inline styles on the page.

Question 14

A number of candidates failed to convert the SWAB5ICO.jpg into a smaller size and then into a more compressed format as a gif file.

Question 15

A number of candidates failed to resize the image SWAB5PHO.jpg to 400 pixels wide, some resized the width of the image but failed to maintain the aspect ratio, therefore distorting the image.

Presentation Authoring

Question 1

The use of the master slide was poorly completed. A significant number of candidates placed their name at the top of each page rather than placing it as specified in the master slide. Similarly the page numbering and placed graphic were not always present on the master slide.

Questions 2 and 3

The colour schemes chosen for this paper allowed for good distinction when printed in black and white. Candidates must ensure that if the Centre is using a black and white printer the colours selected give suitable contrast.

Question 4

This question was poorly attempted by a large number of candidates. The subheading was often correctly inserted, but few candidates applied the styles as specified in **Question 2**, particularly relating to left aligning the subheading.

Question 5

Sometimes candidates would put the notes directly onto the slide, or sometimes simply not use them at all, but generally this question was done well.

Question 8

A number of candidates included a legend for the chart, despite the instruction to 'Do not display a legend'.

Question 9

A number of candidates used a variety of different lines, horizontal, vertical, diagonal, arrows and boxes. Some candidates omitted this instruction completely.