Principal Examiner Feedback

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Applied GCE ICT

6953 - The Knowledge Worker

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General Comments

In general, the 6953 paper for this series followed its usual pattern, with the activities being similar in content to previous series. There was a slight change to the requirements of activity two as the answers were expected to be expanded, rather than just simple lists.

Candidates, on the whole, seemed well prepared for the paper but there was strong evidence of an over-reliance on prepared solutions to the model. Many centres had worked a solution to the practice model with their candidates, a practise which Edexcel would encourage. There were also solutions published on various forums which is **NOT** encouraged by Edexcel. In both cases, the solutions given are a "best guess" at what would be required in the paper and it is possible that what is actually required is slightly different. Candidates should therefore be prepared in such a way as they are able to apply the techniques to what they are asked to do rather than apply a solution by rote.

Activity 1

This activity is entitled "Understanding the Situation" and has changed little throughout the life of the qualification. The candidates are expected to find, from the scenario, points that are relevant to the model or the problem they have to solve. They also have to identify the decisions they have to make. In earlier series, there used to be another aspect to this activity which asked the candidate what assumptions they made. Although this hasn't been asked for four years, a significant minority of candidates doggedly still supply these assumptions.

The activity, however, is generally well done and this series is no exception. There are two approaches to this question. The first is concise bullet points which identify aspects of the scenario relevant to the problem they have to solve. This is the approach we expect. The other approach is to put in as many points as the candidate can find, relevant or irrelevant, sometimes copying large parts of the scenario. This second approach is more time consuming but is no less successful in terms of marks gained. Centres should be warned, however, that in future series the second approach may not be quite as successful.

Activity 2

Of all the activities in the paper this is the one that has undergone the most changes. This is necessary, as each scenario is different. However, the purpose of the activity is always the same and asks the candidate to analyse some of the data **SOURCES**. The activity requires the candidate to use common sense and their own experiences to decide how accurate and useful the data provided by the source is likely to be. Because of this, this activity is least served by past papers, although this does not stop candidates from supplying the answers to previous examinations in the hope that they will collect a few marks. We are often looking for aspects of surveys such as sample size, or the reputation of data source but, as in this instance, this is not always the case.

There were two parts to this question, but both referred to the data used to predict the sales of the proposed outlets. The first part was about the sales figures provided by the Falmouth shop. We were looking for explanations of aspects which might affect sales either between one year and the next, or between Falmouth and the other outlets. Answers were disappointing; many candidates mentioned the recession but didn't go on to explain why this would affect the predictions. A large number of candidates mentioned the weather, but this was used as an example in the question.

The second part of the question was looking for reasons why Steve chose figures from souvenir shop chain rather than the surfer supplies franchise. It was apparent that some centres had identified this as a possible question, as there was really no other reason why the surfer supply chain was mentioned in the scenario. Answers tended to concentrate on the similar product theme but candidates often lost marks by not expanding their answer.

Many candidates thought Steve actually wanted to open a souvenir shop and this produced some confused answers.

Activity 3
As in previous series, this activity was the one in which most candidates achieved the majority of their marks. There were very few examples of candidates being unable to get some kind of working model, even if the model did not always work properly.

Few candidates had any problem importing the data, and the simple formulae to copy the cost, revenue and profit onto the 'Values' worksheet also caused few problems. However, several candidates over-complicated it a little and added the rows up again rather than taking the total value and copying it.

The "Advertising" and "Totals" worksheets caused candidates to lose the most marks. Both asked for, quite clearly in the question, simple IF statements. Thanks to their centres preparation or the solutions published in the various forums, many candidates entered the examination armed with an IF AND formula which they insisted on using, despite it being clearly stated in the question that this was not required.

In many cases the overall model would supply the right answers, so candidates were awarded the marks for their solution. However, these formulae did not do what the question asked them to do and as a result, marks were lost.

Candidates should be warned to read the question and do what it says rather than do what they think it should do.

The activity requires row and column headings on each printout and also headers, footers and gridlines. Many candidates lost mark by failing to do this on **ALL** printouts. It should be noted that candidates are required to print their worksheets and not screenshots.

Activity 4

This activity requires a report to be written which should include the candidates' recommendations, justification of these recommendations, other factors which might affect the outcome, and some form of graphical representation. There are also marks for the layout of the report. This is also the activity where quality of written communication is tested.

Recommendations - The majority of candidates included screenshots of their solution showing where to open shops and what advertising to use.

Justification – Again, the majority of candidates included a justification of their decisions and good many referred to profit that this would make and some included a screenshot of the amount of profit.

Other Factors – The majority of candidates identified a least one factor but not always in addition to that included in the model.

Graphical Representation of Data – The large majority of candidates included a chart in the report. Some showed monthly costs, revenue and profit clearly, some showed these as individual charts and some displayed factors less relative to the report. Generally candidates included a title including axis titles and legend although there were also a significant number who omitted these.

Report layout – the majority of students correctly produced a report, but as in previous years there were quite a few who produced the report as a memo and letter.

Activity 5

As in past series, candidates found this activity difficult, but it was encouraging to see pockets (generally centre-wide) of good practice. There were a lot of simplistic comments that showed no understanding. Too many gave 'rote' responses about "it was easy to enter the numbers…"

Centres need to encourage candidates to evaluate and practice this important exam skill. The majority of students did get the ease of use marks, although these were tried and tested comments from past series.

Comments for improvement still tended to focus on the cosmetics and outcomes of rather than the model. Too many students, though, got the idea started, but failed to explain why this would improve the model or how they would do it.

Overall Comments

Many candidates produced work with very poor spelling and grammar. This was particularly evident for the report where quality of written communication is tested.

All questions in most cases were attempted and in general though there did not appear to be any evidence to suggest that students did not have enough time to complete Activities 4 or 5 as most scripts were complete.

Grade Boundaries

Centres are reminded that the GCE in Applied ICT is an Awarded qualification. As such, grade boundaries are subject to review each series for both written paper and coursework units.

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