

Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2012

Applied GCE 6953

Unit 3 – The Knowledge worker

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General

The format of the paper has changed slightly for this series. Over the whole paper, the same aspects were covered, but sometimes in a slightly different way. Centres should be aware of the dangers of preparing answers based on previous papers. The change to the requirements of activity two, which appeared in the previous two series, in as much as the answers were expected to be expanded rather than just simple lists, continued in this series.

Centres are reminded that discussion of Secure materials is prohibited, as outlined in the Instructions for the Conduct of Examinations document, published on the Edexcel website for each series. Solutions published on forums tended to be overly complex and often incorrect. Candidates should therefore be prepared in such a way as they are able to apply the techniques and knowledge to the questions asked in the paper, rather than apply a solution by rote.

Activity 1

A slight difference to the format of this question occurred in this series. Candidates were asked to supply 15 points using bullet points. Only the first fifteen bullet points were marked. The intention of this was to discourage candidates from quoting large parts of the scenario and gaining marks almost by default. Many candidates still quoted things from the scenario which were not relevant to the task and therefore, did not gain marks even if sometime they listed valid points after the fifteen bullet point boundary. Candidates should be advised to ensure that the issues they list are relevant to their assigned role.

The second part of the question was answered more effectively by candidates. Most candidates stated tyres and number of pit stops. Many did not gain the mark for the amount of fuel to add, as they did not factor in the fuel to be loaded at the start as well. Many candidates missed which laps to stop on, and some thought they had to choose a driver.

Activity 2

This activity was poorly answered in some cases. The most common mistake was made where candidates wrote about the race itself, rather than the testing. Another common misinterpretation was writing about the weather instead of aspects of it. The other general weakness of answers to the activity was the lack of specific detail on the points made by candidates, failing to expand the point made with a reason / example / explanation. This led to candidates being unable to access marks.

Activity 3

This activity was again, generally well answered, although there were some common errors or misinterpretations. Surprisingly on the data input worksheet candidates too often copied values down incorrectly, therefore not gaining the transcription marks as well as marks for using the model. The

insertion of a formula was undertaken well and quite often with considerable skill, often only let down with transcription or data entry errors. Overall, most candidates demonstrated a good understanding of the second section, giving acceptable responses to all three formulas, with the majority gaining most of the marks.

Common errors were an occasional lack of understanding of 'absolute addressing', and incorrect 'false' sections of an 'if' formula, mainly because of transcription errors. The main reason candidates failed to gain marks was because of 'truncated columns', meaning that marks could not be awarded simply because the whole of the formula could not be seen.

An important point to note here is the spreadsheet capabilities expected of candidates. We need candidates to be familiar with most of the common functions such as SUM, AVERAGE, MIN, MAX, IF, VLOOKUP, COUNT and COUNIF. Please note that this is not a complete list. In addition, candidates should be capable of a number of spreadsheet manipulations, such as setting print areas, hiding and unhiding columns, rows and worksheets, protecting and unprotecting cells and worksheets, assigning range names and widening rows and columns. Again this is not an exhaustive list but centres should note that a number of marks not awarded in this series due to candidates' inability to manipulate a spreadsheet.

Activity 4

Again, the presentation of the report was rather disappointing with few candidates showing a good understanding of what was required; a number of responses demonstrated only repetition of the wording of the scenario. Layout of the report, however, showed a big improvement on previous years. Most candidates followed the suggested sub-headings well and very few wrote informally. The majority of candidates included a chart/graph, although the relevance was in many cases questionable.

Activity 5

This is a new format for question five where, fundamentally, an evaluation in its traditional form was not required. However, many candidates still provided an evaluation in the same format as previous years. It seems that some candidates did not read the question, rather assuming that the task required the same response as in previous series. Candidates are reminded to read each question carefully to ascertain the required response.

On the whole, the work in this activity was somewhat better than previous series, in as much as the main points were identified and mentioned. However, marks were often not awarded because the points made by candidates were not expanded upon, or fully explained.

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.

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