

Moderators' Report Principal Moderator Feedback

June 2011

Applied GCE
6954 01 - System Design and
Installation

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General comments

It was again pleasing to see that a high percentage of the eportfolios submitted were in a format which allowed the moderator to easily find the evidence. Centres are reminded that it is not the moderator's role to have to search through eportfolios and folders to find the relevant evidence; summative testing of the completed eportfolio would eliminate many of the problems that occur in locating the relevant evidence. As stated in previous Principal Moderator's Reports eportfolios should be in a format that can be read in a browser and the files should link together.

Assessors are again advised to use the e-sheet to explain how they arrived at a particular mark in a particular mark band and to state if the candidate worked independently. It was again evident that a small but significant number of centre assessors are still giving no, or almost meaningless feedback to candidates. Comments like 'well done' or 'nice screenshots' do not aid either the candidate, if they wish to improve their work, or the moderator who is trying to establish why a particular mark was given.

Comments on Strand (a) - Needs Analysis

Candidates are required to investigate a client's needs and produce a needs analysis based on the investigation. Many candidates did not evidence two distinct investigative techniques, but tended to produce a questionnaire, often not answered, and then use the same questions as evidence of a meeting with their client. As part of the needs analysis, candidates should describe two existing stand alone computer systems. Achievement would be increased if candidates based these descriptions on systems that have a similar functionality to the needs of their client, rather than just choosing, at random, two existing systems.

There was still a distinct lack of evidence from the majority of candidates when it came to being able to evaluate fully the benefits and perceived drawbacks of the chosen systems in order to give their client an informed conclusion. The production of a proper needs analysis for a client with complex needs is central to this strand and centres are again reminded to refer their candidates to section 4.1 of the unit specification.

Comments on Strand (b) - System Specification

A systems specification, addressing all aspects of 'What you need to learn', written in no-technical terms is the minimum requirement of this strand. The specification must cover both hardware and software which meet their client's requirements. Many candidates are still not taking into account the specific requirements of their client, tending to produce a generic specification rather than one tailor made for their client.

It is expected that the completed report be written as a non-technical explanation as to why all the components, both hardware and software have been chosen for the client. These should be justified as to why they meet the clients needs and for the higher mark bands candidates should offer their client alternatives. This latter point was either omitted completely or very briefly mentioned in a significant number of candidates' evidence for this strand.

For candidates to access the higher mark bands, the produced specification should consist of more than a list of components. It should offer explanations, in lay terms, as to what each component does and why it is necessary that the client has it incorporated into their system. As in previous reports centres should ensure that their candidates are aware of the information in sections 4.2 to 4.6 of the unit specification as to what areas should be considered when putting together their system specification.

Again as in previous moderation series, candidates selected furniture, which they claimed to have ergonomic qualities, but failed to explain why they would be suitable for their client.

Comments on Strand (c) - System Build

It is still a feature of many e-portfolios that candidates appear not to have understood that the strand involves three distinct aspects. Initially, the candidates should demonstrate the building of a stand-alone computer system, preferably to a client's specified requirements; this will allow the candidate the opportunity to demonstrate their ability to install the necessary internal hardware components and to work safely when undertaking the build. The work should be undertaken as an independent activity and not as group work which is still, unfortunately, being evidenced. Upgrading components or the installation of additional hardware components to an already built system will not achieve many marks in this strand, as this activity is more suited to unit 6 Technical Support.

Secondly the learner's should evidence the installation of the required system and application software and thirdly, candidates should demonstrate their ability to configure and customise the total system to meet the stated requirements of their client. Achievement would be raised if candidates based these on the requirements of a client, rather than an ad-hoc build and configuration of a system.

Comments on Strand (d) – Testing

Testing should show that the complete system meets the agreed specification standards, as it is the quality of the evidence showing real understanding of testing, covering all aspects of the unit that is more important than producing evidence of every single test, which results in many pages of similar tests being undertaken.

It was again pleasing to see evidence of some good practice with candidates giving detailed accounts of how they tested the final system and also some end user testing. Photographs and screen dumps of error messages were included.

Candidates should be encouraged to produce annotated evidence of a variety of tests that have been undertaken if they wish to achieve a mark in grade bands two or three. It is important that candidates ensure the evidence produced covers all aspects of the hardware and software that they have installed in their built system. It should be again pointed out that the quality of the evidence showing real understanding of testing is more important than pages of similar test evidence.

Comments on Strand (e) - Evaluation

Many candidates' are not producing evaluations that relate to this unit, i.e. an evaluation of the **performance** of the system the learner has built and configured and an evaluation of their performance over the whole unit, the evaluation is not about the performance and structure of the candidate's eportfolio but the performance of the built, tested and configured system and whether or not it met the needs of their client.

It was again evident that many candidates found it difficult to accurately evaluate the work undertaken in this unit and comment reflectively on their own performance. Assessing their skill level at the outset and reviewing the skills obtained through undertaking the unit can help candidates evaluate both their skill level and their performance overall.

Feedback from others was often omitted and when present was found to be vague and lacking evidence of who provided the feedback and why.

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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