Principal Moderator Feedback

June 2011

Applied GCE
6956 01 – Technical Support

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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 none 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) - Upgrade

Candidates are required to undertake and test an upgrade of a current computer system. The upgrade should be at a minimum one new hardware component and either a software upgrade or the installation of a new item of software. Many candidates do not take into account the specific requirements of their client, tending to undertake the upgrades without any rationale or reason.

In order to obtained the higher grade bands candidates should provided clear screen shots and photographs' or short video clips explaining through detailed commentaries what was happening and why it was being undertaken. Many candidates still did not include any evidence of relevant testing of the upgrade or ensuring that the hardware components were compatible with the original system.

Comments on Strand (b) - On-screen Support Manual

The content and format of the manual produced by the candidates should be for the use of an ICT technician not designed as a self-help guide to end users. It is intended to be used on-line and should be in a file format which allows this. PDF and, in general, PowerPoint file formats do not lend themselves to on-line publications. During the moderation period it was still evident that candidates and assessors seem to be still unaware of the different user categories the manual is aimed at, in mark band 2 the level of user is an ICT Technician and in mark band 3 the audience for the manual is someone who should be able to use the information provided without having to refer to others for assistance.

It was still evident that a minority of candidates failed to recognise the fact that the manual was to be viewed on screen and produced a product which needed the reader to continually scroll up and down as there were no links to other sections or pages. In some instances, the reader had to not only scroll up and down but from side to side. The lack of a maintenance schedule and a method of recording all the regular and non regular work undertaken restricted many candidates to the lower or middle mark bands.

Comments on Strand (c) - Collaborative Working Tools

Many candidates appeared not to have understood that this strand involves two distinct aspects. Initially, the candidates should identify and describe the key features of a minimum of four web-based tools used for collaborative working. Achievement would be raised if candidates included a range of well-chosen examples of each chosen web-based tool. Secondly, the learners should provide evidence of the setup and use of one web-based tool. In many cases there is only evidence of the use of one of the tools.

As in previous series, a large majority of candidates were able to identify and describe four collaborative working tools. There were once again major omissions from the evidence produced in that many candidates failed to indicate significant points relating to the capabilities and limitations of the tools chosen.

To enable the candidate to access the top of mark band 1 and move into mark band 2, the candidate must make some comparison of the chosen collaborative tools. These omissions were not always reflected in the grading of this strand by centre assessors.

As stated in previous Principal Moderators Reports and the unit specification, it is essential that candidates who wish to gain marks in mark band 3 must have used a range (at least 3) well chosen examples which fully evaluate the key features of each of the four chosen tools. At this level, they must be able to show that the chosen tools are totally suitable for particular tasks and fully describe the processes involved in setting up and using a particular tool.

Comments on Strand (d) - Communication needs of a small business
Candidates are expected to produce a business report for a stated SME which contains a detailed account of their investigation into the communication needs for the SME. They must have also produced justified recommendations for each of internet connectivity, security procedures, an internet access policy and use of email.

A significant minority of candidates did not produce recommendations for each of the above points, which is a requirement to reach the top of mark band 1; this requirement was not always recognised during the assessment process.

Achievement would be raised if candidates produced a report for a specific SME and through their investigation identified their client's actual needs rather than generic communication needs.

Even after reinforcing and repeating these comments in previous Principal Moderators Reports, a number of centres are still allowing candidates to produce a generic report rather than undertake investigation into communication needs of a specified small to medium sized business.

Many candidates who had submitted evidence suitable to gain marks in mark band two rarely produced sufficient detailed evidence of an SME's communication needs and did not make any justification for their recommendations for all the required topics, thus restricting them to mark band 2.

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.

Grade boundaries for this, and all other papers, can be found on the website on this link:

http://www.edexcel.com/iwantto/Pages/grade-boundaries/aspx