

Principal Examiners Feedback

January 2012

Applied GCE

6956 01 – Technical Support

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Unit 6: Technical Support (6956)

General comments

There were only a small number of entries for this winters moderation and many of the points raised previously are still valid. The comments from previous Principal Moderators Reports are still and unfortunately in some instances valid.

Assessors are making better use of the e-sheet to explain where evidence is located and how marks were awarded, and if the candidate worked independently this latter point is a requirement of the higher mark bands but there is still a tendency for some assessors to offer praise but no constructive advice.

Lack of proof reading was still very evident throughout a high number of submitted portfolios with alarmingly many examples of evidence containing uncorrected errors. The introduction of Quality of Written Communication to strand d makes it important that candidates are recommended to proof read their work thoroughly.

Strand (a) – Upgrade

Again the most common upgrades were the installation of more RAM or a larger Hard Disk or DVD|CD-ROM Drive and the installation of an anti virus package or service pack but even after comments in previous reports it was evident that a number of candidates still were not explaining what the rationales behind the upgrades were. Testing of functionality and optimising the system are requirements at the higher mark band, evidence showing real understanding of testing is more important than pages of similar test evidence. Candidates' did not always demonstrate standard ways of working notably safety precautions undertaken prior to and whilst performing the upgrade to the hardware components.

Strand (b) - On-screen Support Manual

Again unfortunately a minority of candidates still failed to recognise the fact that the manual was to be produced in a format which would enable it to be viewed on screen, a requirement for marks at the top of mark band 1, which resulted in the reader having to continually scroll up and down and in some instances from side to side.

Whilst this strand in the main was reasonably well covered it is important that candidates' are aware 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.

The inclusion of step-by-step trouble shooting strategies for **several** potential problems was still weakly covered. The lack of a realistic and suitable maintenance schedule prevented many candidates moving into mark band three.

Strand (c) - Collaborative Working Tools

Candidates were, in a large majority of eportfolios, able to identify and describe, at times somewhat briefly, four collaborative working tools. There was 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 comparisons between 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. This was once again the major omission from the evidence presented for moderation.

Strand (d) - Communication needs of a small business

This strand requires candidates to select a small to medium sized organisation on which they will carry out an investigation into its communications needs and then produce a report, in relatively simple and non-technical language, with justified recommendations for internet connectivity, security procedures, an internet policy and the use of email.

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

It was pleasing to see that a majority of candidates were able to produce recommendations for each of the points mentioned in the first paragraph, which is a requirement to reach the top of mark band 1. There was however still centres giving high marks when one or more of the four major points were omitted.

Those candidates' who gained marks in mark band two produced sufficient, detailed evidence of an SME's communication needs and were able to make detailed recommendations for all the required topics. At mark band three it is essential that the report includes some future-proofing elements with a full and detailed justification of the SME's communications needs. Quality of Written Communication was judged in this strand but the standard was in the main corresponding to the mark band awarded.

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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