

Principal Moderator Feedback

Summer 2010

Applied GCE

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Information and Communication Technology (6958)

Paper 01 - Managing ICT Projects

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General Comments

This was the first time the work was assessed on the updated version of the specification

Being a core unit there were a good number of entries this series with moderated marks of 1-58. Once again a good number of eportfolios with marks in the 40s and 50s. Overall the assessment was more realistic with many more centres demonstrating better understanding of this unit. On the other hand, there are still a significant number of centres who are continuing to assess the evidence produced very generously. It is apparent that not all centres have addressed the weaknesses highlighted in Moderator reports to the centre or reacted to guidance given in past Principal Moderator's reports for this unit. Many of the weaknesses detailed in the report written at the end of summer 2009 series are still relevant for many centres.

Most centres are using this unit to project manage the product created for units 6960 or 6961 with a few for unit 6962. There are also examples of a database product being produced as candidates are being prepared for unit 6957. All these approaches are suitable. Many eportfolios, although combined, had clear links to the evidence for each unit and 2 CDs were sent, one for each unit which is the correct practice. However, some combined eportfolios were very poorly presented and it was difficult to find the relevant evidence. More comments on these issues are detailed under the relevant strand comments.

Again, there was evidence of documentation for this unit being produced retrospectively which did not support a product as being planned, designed and implemented using project management methods to hand over the product and deliverables to an agreed deadline. Such an approach does not support the correct implementation of this unit and limits the marks that can be accessed.

QWC

This was assessed for the first time under the updated specification, The majority of centres commented on QWC on the e-sheet and used the criteria correctly. However some misunderstanding was evident in a few cases.

The rules for QWC are as follows:

- The content of the work is marked, identifying the band and the mark that the work is worth.
- The QWC is assessed and the mark is then adjusted, within the band, to give a final mark.
- The content mark cannot be increased on the basis of QWC.
- If the content mark awarded is at the bottom of a band, the student's mark cannot be reduced further.
- QWC should not be assessed elsewhere in the unit.

Centre Administration

Candidates need to supply explicit evidence to support their achievement of the criteria in the various marking grids. It is easier to confirm marks if the evidence is easy to find and supplied in an explicit form. Assessors must use the e-sheets as an opportunity to explain why they have awarded marks, there are two advantages to this for the centre. If the moderator can see why and where marks are awarded it is easier to agree with the centre marks, secondly if the centre marks cannot be agreed then the moderator can give better guidance to help future assessment.

A number of centres still do not meet deadlines for submitting work to the moderators; the deadlines are published in advance and must be adhered to unless special permission has been obtained in advance from Edexcel. Permission will only be granted in exceptional circumstances. Centres who miss the deadline risk having the results delayed or the candidates recorded as absent. Each unit must be on a separate CD, even if sent to the same moderator. Most centres submitted the CDs by the deadline but some submitted at least a week late.

Most centres named the eportfolios with the correct naming conventions but many did not do so for the naming of the esheets. Most centres provided candidate authentication in the form of individual sheets scanned on to the CD or provided hard copy format of these or a signed printout of the submitted marks. However, some centres had to be contacted to supply candidate authentication sheets. These are an essential part of the moderation process.

Esheets did not always contain feedback that actually explained the why the marks given were awarded but were general comments cut and pasted from the specification. In a few cases no feedback was given. There were also instances of esheets incorrectly added up and sometimes marks not corresponding with those on line.

Some centres are still submitting evidence in incorrect file formats. The project management files have been commented on in strand b. However word files are still being included. Word is not an accepted file format and centres are asked to ensure candidates convert to html or pdf formats.

Some of the eportfolios had links that did not work and folders had to be examined to see if the evidence was present. It is important CDs are tested prior to submission. It is also important that CDs are clearly labelled as stated in the above document. Some CDs submitted contained no identification.

Most centres had submitted a separate CD for 6958 which is correct practice. Most candidates had clear links to the evidence to support 6958. A few had combined eportfolios which were poorly structured.

The Project

All candidates are required to be a Project Manager and manage a small scale software project themselves. There were a few instances where group work had obviously been undertaken and evidence of the Assessor leading the group and chairing all meetings. Such an approach does not address this specification.

One of the recurring weaknesses observed is the lack of the use of a range of stakeholders. Many candidates appeared to only be liaising with a "teacher" and this does not enable them to access all the marks for this unit.

Ambiguous evidence relating to dates is still being presented in many eportfolios. The handover date of the finished product and deliverables to the client should be agreed with the client and finalised in the Definition of Scope. This date should then be clearly shown in the initial plan drawn up before the project is implemented. This date should not change and the project should be managed to meet this end date. The date should be clearly specified to include day, month and year and not just a general date stating a month.

Most candidates used project management software which is a requirement for this unit and is clearly specified in the Revised Specification, Issue 2 May 2009. A few centres are still using spreadsheet software which means that candidates cannot access all the marks available. There were also instances where candidates had not converted the project management files to html or a pdf or a screen shot included in a document in the correct file format. Project management files are not accepted file formats and cannot be moderated. This has an impact on agreeing marks awarded. Centres are asked to check that the evidence is in the correct file format so that candidates are not disadvantaged in any way.

Centres will find that there is more clarification and guidance on the 5 strands in the Revised Specification now in use, Issue 2 - May 2009.

Strand A - Project Proposal

The majority of candidates produced a Project Proposal and Definition of Scope and the assessment was generally realistic. However, it is clear that many candidates do not understand the difference between these documents. It was also apparent that many had not produced the documents at the start of the project. Many candidates are still not including the Impact on Personnel and Practices, ie how the implementation of the product may impact on existing jobs and they way they are carried out. Candidates are explaining risks to the product and not risks affecting the implementation and completion of the project. Dates were often confused with different dates being stated for the same thing, ie different handover dates. The dates in the Definition of Scope should have been agreed with the Client and these form the basis of the Project Plan.

The Project Proposal should address 8.3 of the unit specification and the Definition of Scope 8.2 and 8.4. These documents should be presented in a suitable format for the audience.

There were fewer instances of writing frames being used but some were still seen. Such an approach is not appropriate for A level candidates.

Many candidates are still trying to evidence two units in this strand which is not appropriate as strand a for this unit is different (with different marks) than units 6960, 6961 and 6962. Centres are strongly advised to ensure all candidates produce separate evidence for each unit thereby addressing the relevant strands more accurately.

Many candidates concentrated on the product rather than the project itself.

Some candidates are still not defining stakeholders correctly and 8.2 gives a list of appropriate titles. The difference in the roles of the Client and Senior Manager was not always understood.

Strand B - Project Plan

It was good to see most candidates used project management software which is a requirement if all the marks in mark band 1 and above are to be accessed. This is clearly specified in the Revised Specification. Most candidates had converted the plans to the correct file format so they could be accessed. However, there were still instances of files presented in project management format and assessed which is not correct practice. Such files cannot be accepted as evidence. Some candidates converted the files to html or pdf, or included a screen shot in a correctly formatted document but then did not present the end result in a size that could be read, or cropped the evidence so that it did represent what it was meant to.

Risks were usually included in the form of slippage in the plan/s but not always in appropriate places. Some candidates included this after the handover date as one chunk of time. More thought needs to be given to where contingency time should be placed and how much time given. Few candidates categorised the risks which is a requirement if accessing all the marks in mark band 2. It was good to see some of the stronger candidates demonstrating well how risks are used by a project manager by listing, ranking and describing them in a table and then adjusting them at each review meeting with key stakeholders and showing the results in the updated plans. This is very good practice.

Many plans were just lists of tasks rather than addressing 8.6 of the unit specification and clearly illustrating the phases and then ensuring the plan/s include the features listed in 8.7. It was surprising how many candidates did not actually state the handover date of the project to the client. Others were still including the evaluation and submission of the eportfolio which is not relevant.

Most candidates included updates of plans but often the updates just showed the tasks ticked off at different intervals.

Some candidates appeared to think the handover date could be changed as the project progressed instead of managing the project to achieve the agreed handover date. This date should remain constant but other activities and dates within the plan period can be adjusted to ensure the final deadline is met. When this was done, many candidates omitted to explain the changes made. Few produced progress reports explaining these changes which were then presented at the next Review Meeting, with the updated plan, to the relevant stakeholders, one of which should be the Senior Manager who would oversee the Project Manager's progress.

Some candidates produced diaries and progress logs explaining each version of the plan and changes which was good practice. Some diaries and logs also recorded all contact with other stakeholders which helped evidence informal communication well.

Strand C - Project Management

Although there were many candidates who are now producing better evidence for this strand, it was still often very generously assessed. There are 20 marks available and many candidates did not address all aspects. To access all the marks in mark band 1 there should be some evidence of communication with stakeholders (not just one other) and evidence of both formal and informal communication with different

types of meetings held and at least one progress report. Very often the evidence was placed in too high a mark band.

There was little understanding of different types of meetings, ie meetings using the different stakeholders in different ways. It is expected that there should be evidence of Review Meetings at strategic points in the project and these should be clearly stated in the Plan, an End of Project Review Meeting with relevant stakeholders after the project has been handed over to the Client.

Few candidates clearly demonstrated the different roles of the Client and Senior Manager.

More use of stakeholders is required if candidates are being awarded marks in mark band 2 and above. Very often other stakeholders were listed in meetings but took no active part. The use of peer testers and reviewers was not well evidenced. Such contact could be documented in progress logs, diaries etc.

Candidates who only evidenced contact with one other, which was usually the Assessor playing the role of the Client are not able to access all the marks in mark band 1.

It would appear that not all candidates were Project Managers running their own small scale software project. There was evidence in some centres of the Assessor chairing a group meeting rather than each Project Manager chairing a meeting in their own right which is a requirement of this specification.

The presentation of agendas and minutes was often poor. The Revised Specification has included this under the ICT skills needed (8.12) and good presentation of these documents is required if candidates are to access all the marks in mark band 2. Very often candidates have used cut and paste with the result that the content is not always sensible and dates do not correlate. Too much emphasis was on the prototyping of the product rather than progressing the project against the plan and updates. Some candidates presented the documentation well but neglected to record much relevant content in the minutes. Some of the minutes were, in fact, agendas. Other minutes did not contain the date, venue or attendees. It was not always obvious if the Project Manager was driving the project forward. Comments saying this was the case on the esheet need to be supported by evidence in the eportfolio.

Progress reports were not well evidenced by many candidates. These really should be part of the Review Meetings and explain where the project is in relation to the current update of the plan. They can be presented at the meeting or sent to the stakeholders with agenda documents. Some candidates presented them in the form of PowerPoint Presentations at the meetings which was good practice. Few minutes referred to the progression of the project against the plan.

Some candidates presented progress logs which contained screen shots of the plan with comments. There should be some correlation with such logs and the evidence for this strand demonstrating the use of relevant stakeholders.

Some of the informal communication evidence was not convincing and it was difficult to see if emails had actually been sent and received. The content of many just referred to dates of the next meeting rather than a range of issues related to the progression of the project. Candidates who kept diaries throughout the project and

included reference to informal communication and sometimes screen shots of emails often evidenced this aspect very well.

As already said, the roles of the Client and Senior Manager were often poorly understood. Candidates did not understand the difference in the types of meetings attended by each. Handover meetings with the Client often omitted the date the product was handed over and, in some cases, it would appear there were still things to be undertaken. The product and deliverables should be finished and complete.

Candidates often held an End of Project Review meeting but then neglected to document any feedback on the 3 aspects of strand e for this unit. Very often the feedback was on the product and not the:

- success of the project
- effectiveness of the project methods used
- candidate's own performance as a project manager

The feedback is essential in order for the candidates to address strand e well.

Strand D - The Software Product

Many centres are still awarding marks based on the product which is incorrect. The emphasis of this strand is on producing a software product in accordance with the project plan.

Many centres appeared to mark this strand on the quality of the product, not taking into account whether it was produced using project management methods. The product produced needs to be included in the eportfolio and also needs to reflect A2 standards.

However, the marks are determined if the product has been project managed effectively and is handed over on the agreed deadline. It is important that the date agreed with the client in strand a for the handover of the product and deliverables is met. There may be changes in the dates of some of the activities while the project progresses but these are changed to ensure the end date is kept to.

There was evidence of plans not being used and end dates changing. There was also evidence of products being handed over well in advance of the date with no explanation. Evidence such as this does not support this strand.

There should be correlation of the progress against the plan. This should be evidenced by the updated plans and explanation produced for strand b and the progress reports and other communication submitted for strand e. Many candidates neglected to evidence this well. Minutes often contained no reference to the plan and, although there were often updates to the plans, the explanation of why the changes occurred was often not there.

Few candidates clearly evidenced the handover to the client and many neglected to clearly state this had happened in a handover meeting to the client or in the final end of project review meeting. Some candidates did evidence this well by producing a handover document which the client completed which included the date, signature and sometimes some feedback.

Some candidates produced evidence in their evaluations which addressed some aspects of this strand, eg evaluating against the objectives stated in strand a.”

The evidence relating to dates was often very ambiguous and, in some cases, demonstrated that reverse engineering had taken place. There was evidence of dates changing and the product being handed over on a date not mentioned in the plan. There was evidence of emails sent and received after the handover date. Many candidates just produced updates of plans and each plan had the end date changed which meant the candidate had not managed the project properly at all. Other candidates had stated a handover date and then proceeded to hand the product over several weeks in advance which, again, is not managing a project using project management methods. Such evidence does not address this strand correctly.

The strongest candidates provided some excellent evidence in the eportfolio, supporting the requirements of this strand, which included:

- Comprehensive plans, updates and explanations
- Progress logs and diaries
- Review meetings which clearly documented the progression of the project against the plan
- Progress reports presented to stakeholders at the Review Meetings
- Handover documents (handover meeting, acceptance document) clearly stating the date the product and deliverables were handed over to the client
- Evaluation which provided further supporting evidence of the project management methods used to implement the project. Very often the evaluations reviewed the objectives set in the Definition of Scope which helped evidence this strand and also the success of the project which is part of strand e.

Strand E - Evaluation

The End of Project Review Meeting was not always evidenced which meant the marks available in this strand could not be accessed. However, most candidates had produced some minutes of a final meeting although this was sometimes just a handover meeting with the client. Few minutes documented the feedback from the stakeholders which enabled candidates to evidence this strand well.

Many evaluations concentrated on the product and some were combined evaluations for units 6960 or 6961. Centres are strongly urged to ensure candidates write a separate evaluation for each unit. The requirements of strand e are very different and carry different mark weightings.

The evaluation for this unit requires candidates to hold a review meeting after the project has finished and feedback is obtained from relevant stakeholders addressing the 3 main areas listed for this strand. The assessment guidance gives clarification on the exact requirements for each of the 3 mark bands. Many of the evaluations did not refer to feedback obtained, or if they did, the feedback was not obtained at a final review meeting. There was even evidence that some candidates held the final meeting prior to handing over the product.

Candidates should prepare for this final meeting by thinking about what the meeting needs to achieve. A good agenda and preparatory documents can help.

Unit Results

Grade	Maximum Mark	A	B	C	D	E	N
Boundary Mark	60	46	40	34	28	23	18
Max Uniform Mark	100	80	70	60	50	40	0-39

Candidates who do not achieve the standard required for a grade E will receive a uniform mark in the range of 0-39.

Note

Grade boundaries may vary from year to year and from subject to subject.

Qualification Results

Advanced Subsidiary (Single Award)

The minimum uniform marks required for each grade:

Qualification Grade	A	B	C	D	E
Maximum Uniform Mark = 300	240	210	180	150	120

Candidates who do not achieve the standard required for a grade E will receive a uniform mark in the range of 0-119.

Advanced GCE (Single Award)

The minimum uniform marks required for each grade:

Qualification Grade	A	B	C	D	E
Maximum Uniform Mark = 600	480	420	360	300	240

Candidates who do not achieve the standard required for a grade E will receive a uniform mark in the range of 0-239.

Advanced Subsidiary (Double Award)

The minimum uniform marks required for each grade:

Qualification Grade	AA	AB	BB	BC	CC	CD	DD	DE	EE
Maximum Uniform Mark = 600	480	450	420	390	360	330	300	270	240

Candidates who do not achieve the standard required for a grade EE will receive a uniform mark in the range of 0-239.

Advanced GCE with Advanced Subsidiary (Additional)

The minimum uniform marks required for each grade:

Qualification Grade	AA	AB	BB	BC	CC	CD	DD	DE	EE
Maximum Uniform Mark = 900	720	690	630	600	540	510	450	420	360

Candidates who do not achieve the standard required for a grade EE will receive a uniform mark in the range of 0-359.

Advanced GCE (Double Award)

The minimum uniform marks required for each grade:

Qualification Grade	AA	AB	BB	BC	CC	CD	DD	DE	EE
Maximum Uniform Mark = 1200	960	900	840	780	720	660	600	540	480

Candidates who do not achieve the standard required for a grade EE will receive a uniform mark in the range of 0-479

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