

Principal Examiners Feedback

January 2012

Applied GCE

6958 01 – Managing ICT Projects

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Unit 8: Managing ICT Projects (6958)

General Comments

This report should be read in conjunction with the more detailed report written for Summer 2011.

It was good to see that many candidates are understanding this unit well now and moderated marks were seen in the range 2-52 with a good number in the 40s and several in the low 50s. Although many centres are assessing well and realistically, it was disappointing to see a number who were assessing inconsistently across their cohorts.

Comments on strand a

Most centres are assessing this strand correctly. Some candidates are describing the risks to the product and not the project, although sometimes there was evidence in strand b, which did clearly explain the risks to the project and categorised them.

Comments on strand b

Nearly all candidates correctly used project management software to produce project plans. It was good to see many candidates produced a schedule of risks and categorised them well. Candidates who performed better updated the schedule of risks and categorisation as the project progressed. A good number of candidates produced updates of the plan throughout the project and explained how the plan developed and the changes made.

However, many candidates were still being assessed generously for the evidence produced and placed in mark band 2 or 3 when a lower mark band would be more appropriate. Too many candidates were simply producing several copies of the plans with ticks for more activities completed and, in many instances, the plans were identical apart from the ticks. Such evidence only addresses mark band 1.

There are still many candidates who are not incorporating risks into the plan itself which is required for mark band 1. This is normally shown by including slippage/contingency time at appropriate points. Some candidates demonstrated a lack of understanding of risks and put the entire contingency at the end and, in some cases, after the handover date.

There were still examples of candidates not including a specified agreed handover date in the plan with items such as testing, documentation, training mentioned but not the handover of the product and deliverables to the client on the agreed date.

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. The best diaries and logs included screen shots showing the before and after changes to the current project plan.

It is important that there is strong correlation between strands b and c in order to evidence strand d well.

Comments on strand c

This strand is still being generously assessed by many centres and, as mentioned, the Principal's report for Summer 2011 gives detailed feedback.

More centres are presenting the agendas and minutes well but there were still instances of the agendas containing the names of attendees, date and venue and this not appearing in the minutes. Some candidates had documents with incorrect dates, e.g. meetings held after the handover of the project.

Some centres appeared to have a class meeting rather than each Project Manager holding and chairing their own meetings which is the correct approach for this unit. Each candidate has to project manage their own project.

There were many instances of stakeholders listed on documents but no evidence of their participation in the project at all.

Many minutes still only mentioned the product and not how the project was being progressed against the project plan and current update. Few candidates presented progress reports to the stakeholders at review meetings. It was good to see many candidates had produced a diary or log but, often, these contained limited information.

Not all candidates held and documented an End of Project Review Meeting and many that were held just mentioned the product being handed over and no reference or feedback obtained relating to strand e which is the purpose of this meeting.

Comments on strand d

This strand is better understood by many centres and there was often sufficient evidence in strands b and c to confirm the mark awarded by the assessor. Some candidates also included additional evidence confirming the handover and how the project had been progressed. Most candidates correctly included the product and deliverables in the evidence. There were some candidates who had been awarded marks in the higher mark bands although the project was clearly late and sometimes incomplete or of a very poor quality.

Comments on strand e

There were still some candidates not including minutes of an End of Project Review Meeting in the evidence although marks had been awarded for the evaluation. The evaluation is dependent on feedback having been obtained and documented at such a meeting and, if there is no such evidence, then the strand is not addressed and marks cannot be awarded. There were fewer instances of candidates trying to produce a joint evaluation for this unit and the unit relating to the product, e.g. units 10, 11 or 12.

Generally speaking, the candidates producing a joint evaluation seemed to concentrate on the product and not address this unit with the result that strand e was generously assessed. Many candidates produced good evaluations but failed to take into account feedback obtained at the final meeting. Mark band 1 requires some use of such relevant feedback, mark band 2 good use of relevant feedback and mark band 3 extensive use of relevant feedback. However, this strand was correctly assessed by many centres and there was some excellent evidence seen.

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