

# Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2012

Applied GCE 6959

Unit 9 – Communications and  
Networks

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## **General Comments**

Most centres adhered to the ICE document guidelines, which prevent access to the Internet and any electronic storage during the question response session, but there were once again a number of photographs and diagrams which appeared to come from web sites, in this case, the FON organisation. These images, together with the verbatim nature of the text raises the question of supervision standards and whether or not answers had been literally copied and pasted.

There is no need for centres to send research material to the examiner. Such material must be kept securely at the centre until after the results have been published.

The case study is released well before the examination and the great majority of candidates seemed to be aware of the content. The FON system appeared to be well understood by most candidates.

The most common weakness, as in previous examinations, was the failure to work within the context.

## **Comments on individual questions**

### **Activity 1 – Network connectivity.**

#### **A briefing document on the suitability of the FON system**

Most candidates were able to score well in this task and had clearly visited the FON.org and similar sites to obtain relevant information. However, too many candidates wrote down the content verbatim, usually just the introduction to the system, but in many cases, considerable chunks of text. This was a QWC question and candidates should have made the effort to put things into their own words and match the complexity of the text to the question requirements.

The question asked for an appropriate diagram. Many candidates, despite scoring well on content, did not produce a suitable diagram and therefore, did not achieve at the level they were capable of.

#### **Activity 2 – Network management, planning, budgeting, configuration.**

##### **Cost of devices for two budgets. Network security.**

Parts (a) and (b) of this question was usually answered. Most candidates were able to state suitable items for both budgets, although in (a), there were too many 'big budget' smartboards rather than cheap options. Most candidates managed to come under the £3000 budget for part (b) and most were able to give good reasons for their choices.

Part (c) was more poorly answered. Most answers were fairly simplistic and many involved using a third party, Internet-based solution, which would not be appropriate in securing data between devices on a LAN.

### **Activity 3 – Components of a network.**

#### **The hardware and cabling to use in the network.**

This was poorly answered by a large number of candidates. The question stated numerous items that would be required e.g. various printers and computers. Far too many candidates simply listed those items as answers, with no attempt to state which specific pieces of hardware should be used. More successful candidates were able to list appropriate items, including those that might be needed to cope with the scenario-specific requirement.

### **Activity 4 – Network design.**

#### **A design for the network with notes justifying each major decision on positioning of devices.**

Most diagrams were clear and well labelled, although many candidates lost marks by failing to identify cable types or indicating locations. There were still instances of servers being used as switches.

As in all previous examinations, marks were lost by candidates failing to adhere to the design specification.

In Part (b), the notes justifying each major decision, frequently ended up being notes describing the layout, or repeating what the case study said should be done.

More successful candidates scored well here by explaining decisions relating to working in a listed building.

### **Activity 5 – Network protocols.**

#### **A document describing how to operate a server remotely from within a LAN and over the Internet**

This was poorly answered by most candidates. Many used Internet-based systems for the LAN, and systems which required a person at each end for the Internet. Others looked at cloud-based storage, web or SQL server systems and direct connection via a cable. None of these would work in the scenario given.

There were many good descriptions of what a router does. Very few of them had much to do with the scenario.

## **Standard Ways of Working**

Most candidates gained both marks for Standard Ways of Working. Only a handful of candidates lost marks by including extra pages.

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