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Principal Moderator Feedback

Summer 2013

Applied GCE ICT (6962) Paper 01 - Customising Applications

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General Comments

In this moderation window it was pleasing to see that most centres submitted the sample required on one disk and had included the e-sheets and candidate authentication sheets. The majority were labelled according to the correct naming conventions as detailed in the document "Moderation of e-Portfolios: Guidance for Centres". Many candidates' e-portfolios were in the correct file formats, within the stated file size of 25 MB and most contained a clear index file which started the e-portfolio. It was also good to see many assessors giving clear feedback in the e-sheets explaining the assessment decisions made and marks awarded. Refer to the section on administration at the end of this report which details some poor practice relating to the submission of work for moderation. However, quite a few candidates had eportfolios way over the maximum file size.

On the whole most candidates addressed the strands correctly and most assessors awarded marks according to the specification. However, there are still instances of candidates being placed in too high a mark band for the evidence produced.

Comments on strand (a)

A lot of candidates are producing good functional specifications whereby moderators can clearly see who, what, where and so on. However, there are still instances of marks being inappropriately awarded when the success criteria given is not really measurable. Also, at times, candidates are giving very general objectives that could apply to any system. Those who do not provide well-considered and customised objectives tend to find it extremely hard to evaluate in strand E. This also makes it hard for the moderator to determine what the system is about and should do.

Comments on strand (b)

It was nice to see how many candidates addressed this strand well with clear evidence of the design of selection, iteration and sequential searching. However, there are still many candidates who do not evidence this strand correctly. At mark band one, if there are any problems with evidence it tends to be with prototyping and the need for a list of functions. It is worth noting that just including a prototype is not sufficient evidence for the top of mark band 1. It is expected evaluative comments will be present regarding the prototype and that changes will be made to the design because of this evaluation. The list of functions is very important as it helps the moderator see what is going to be coded/customised.

If evidence was weak for mark band two it also tended to be geared around the prototype and the functions to be programmed. For the top of mark band two prototyping needs to go above and beyond what is required for mark band 1. The important thing here is that the evaluation of each prototype needs to relate back to user requirements and how well it meets them. It should also detail changes to be made as a result.

Diagrams are also required for the top of mark band two. There was some excellent evidence of this but also instances where marks were awarded for basic, top level diagrams. It is expected a competent programmer could determine what code to write from these diagrams. Therefore, it is imperative they document selection and iteration properly. Sometimes these cannot be documented correctly because candidates have not taken on board that the system has to include them – particularly iteration.

At mark band three it is expected the design is detailed enough for a competent professional to take away and build that system exactly as it should be and there were some excellent instances where candidates had provided evidence to do just that. However, assessment was generous in other cases. The importance of prototyping cannot be stressed enough here. It is impossible to attain full marks without very effective prototyping because candidates have to show they have considered the needs of end users other than themselves. This must be clear from the prototype evidence and, can be confirmed in the final evaluation. All of this evidence can clearly show how feedback from test users was used to shape and refine the final design.

Comments on strand (c)

Most centres are providing projects which are suitable for A2 and it was very pleasing to see candidates using loops and different types of selection appropriately. It was also nice to see candidates writing effective sql statements that included iteration and selection. There was creative use of coding for many other tasks too. However, at times, there is evidence of candidates being placed in too high a mark band for the evidence present. It is a fundamental requirement of this unit/strand that candidates write their own code to include selection and iteration. This does not mean trying to use recorded macros (spread sheets) or macros (database) to cover it. We are expecting 'hand coding' that covers different types of selection and iteration. Candidates that rely ***entirely*** on the aforementioned macros for evidence will find they do not attract many marks in this strand.

Standard ways of working are also important in this strand. With regards to programming code, that includes good use of indentation and comments clearly explaining the purpose of the code. It is clear to see the comments made about this in previous reports have been taken on board because more and more candidates are now doing this. However, some are still not commenting code, or identifying code they have not written themselves.

Comments on strand (d)

Those candidates who had included good measurable objectives in their specification did this very well indeed, as did those who had worked closely with a client. On the whole this strand is being approached very positively with candidates including detailed test plans and evidence of the results. There was some very good evidence of formative testing in conjunction with clients/prototyping and refinements. However, there are still instances of candidates putting forward a test plan without any hard evidence of the results. We do need to see the results of testing. Candidates could also help

moderation here by clearly identifying which are the boundary, normal, out of range and illegal tests. At times finding evidence of anything other than normal is difficult whilst at other times it is very clear to see some serious and in-depth testing had been carried out.

Comments on strand (e)

There are a significant number of marks for evaluation and it was nice to see how many centres were awarding them correctly. Candidates with strong functional specifications tended to score more highly than those who did not and many in-depth, critical, fully honest evaluations were seen.

It is worth noting here though that the evidence has to be evaluative. At times candidates list the objectives and say met, or write a paragraph or two about each but just say what they have done. We are expecting to find clear evaluative evidence of how well they meet each objective and the evidence to support it.

At mark band one level there can be weaknesses but it does have to be evaluative. At this level there should also be comments about own performance. That means own performance regarding this unit – many candidates are still writing about their performance as a project manager and trying to combine the evaluation of Unit 8 with this. This is very rarely successful. They also have to comment on the effectiveness of their coding and whether it was the best way to meet the requirements. It is not enough to discuss where they have used code.

At mark band two level it is expected the evaluation will be more in-depth, including a good evaluation of objectives/success criteria and the strengths and weaknesses of the system as a whole. At this level the coding used has to be justified and candidates have discussed alternate solutions.

Those candidates who achieved mark band three had ensured they had used prototyping very effectively and could draw on that for involvement of others as well as those who had held final client meetings. It is impossible to achieve mark band three without genuine involvement of others as it is impossible to evaluate the system through anyone's eyes but your own really. The evaluation has to be driven by this feedback with candidates backing up all claims of what is successful (or not) with evidence from others to support this.

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