

Moderators' Report/ Principal Moderator Feedback

Summer 2014

Pearson Edexcel GCE
in Applied ICT (6956)
Paper 01 Technical Support

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General comments

There was a small drop in the number of entries for this summer's moderation and many of the points raised previously are still valid.

It was pleasing to note that most centres had taken into consideration points raised in previous reports and the evidence produced indicated that the requirements of all aspects of the unit were being more fully appreciated by the centres and candidate work seen supported this.

Assessors are again advised to use the e-sheet to explain how they reached a grading decision and to indicate if the candidate worked independently which is a requirement of the higher mark bands. As it was again disappointing to see that, some centre assessors are still giving very little useful feedback. Comments like 'well done' or 'nice screenshots' do not aid either the candidate or the moderator. It is also important that centres adhere to the set number of marks allocated to each mark band and strand.

Lack of proof reading was once again evident in a significantly high number of submitted portfolios, with many candidates' evidence containing uncorrected spelling and grammatical errors on final submission. With the Quality of Written Communication being applied to strand (d) it is important that candidates are recommended to proof read all their work thoroughly.

Strand (a) – Upgrade

Again, as in previous series, 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

Whilst this strand was in the main reasonably well evidenced and assessed, 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 by a small but significant number of candidates. The lack of a realistic and suitable maintenance schedule prevented many candidates moving into mark band three.

Again, 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.

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.

At this level candidates 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. Again the major omission from the evidence presented for moderation was that a significant number of candidates did not evidence the setting up of collaborative tool only its use.

As stated in previous Principal Moderator 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.

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.

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 2 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 3 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.

It was disappointing to see that even after reinforcing and repeating the comments in previous Principal Moderator Report a small but significant number of centres are still allowing candidates to produce a generic report rather than undertake an investigation into communication needs of a specified small to medium sized business.

