

Moderators' Report/
Principal Moderator Feedback

Summer 2015

Pearson Edexcel GCE
In Applied ICT (6952)
Paper 01 The Digital Economy

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General Comments

It is pleasing to be able to report that there was some very accurate assessment at this series with much at national standards. E-portfolios with marks across the whole range were moderated and large numbers of high marks were confirmed.

The requirements for this AS core unit are well established, in the public domain and defined in the unit specification. The assessment criteria indicate the focus of the work to be submitted and the assessment guidance documents explain how and where marks are accessible and to be awarded.

A significant number of centres are failing to address previously reported issues and examples of over-generous assessment and high marks being awarded across all strands - not supported by the evidence submitted - were reported. This is particularly noticeable in respect of strand (d).

Some centres are still taking a very structured approach to the unit, including the use of writing frames and / or topic lists for strands. As a result, the material submitted is usually very obviously similar across an entire cohort. This approach reflects on independence of working and disadvantages the students; it is not expected at this level of qualification.

Immediately upon completion of the moderation, individual reports are written for centres identifying weaknesses in their assessment. It is disappointing to note that frequently points raised in those reports recur in work submitted subsequently, the issues having not been considered or addressed. Despite all mechanisms and support systems in place some centres still fail to appreciate the main requirements of this unit, particularly in relation to the nature and content of strand (d).

Comments on strand (a)

Some very good reports were submitted for this strand and many students secured well deserved marks in MB3.

Usually the sites chosen varied across a cohort as expected. Some students chose unsuitable or inappropriate sites which do not afford the opportunity to address the strand well. The principal requirement of the site chosen is a virtual shopping basket facility that enables goods to be ordered from stock and delivered to a stated address. Auction sites, fast food delivery, download and ticket sales sites should be discouraged.

Most students addressed the aspects listed in 2.3 of the specification but some neglected to consider the transactional aspects of the site, i.e. the virtual shopping basket, payment methods and the capture of customer data in these processes. The reports were usually well illustrated with screen shots and the more able students evaluated the features in relation to the design of the site which is what is expected.

Occasionally, high marks were awarded where the level of detail in the descriptions and / or the features considered did not support the mark. Some students concentrate on the products and content of the site rather than features of the site's design.

Comments on strand (b)

Assessment of this strand is frequently generous with MB2 and MB3 awarded to material that does not map well to the requirements.

Many students considered little more than the 'front-end' events - login, authentication, navigating the site, choice of products, etc - leading up to the checkout and omitted mention of back-office processes entirely. Stock and payments are two essential aspects of a transactional website and some mention of these is expected even in MB1.

Comments on strand (c)

The descriptive content in respect of threats and protective measures is usually well done but many students still appear to have little understanding of the relevance of associated legislation. Assessment is regularly slightly generous with top MB2 awarded based on the descriptive content rather than the expected consideration of the effectiveness of both protective measures and legislation.

Material sufficiently comprehensive to address MB3 is seldom seen.

Comments on strand (d)

Assessment of this strand is often extremely generous. The majority of any mark adjustments made on the unit are likely to be in this strand and this is primarily because the material submitted fails to map to the requirements. Despite the longevity of the qualification, there are numerous centres / students that seem unaware of the specific requirements of the strand and either fail to undertake the necessary database work or merely omit the requisite evidence.

Many students submitted innumerable pages of step by step software specific instructions in respect of the creation and implementation of their database. This is not necessary. Screenshots documenting the various aspects and facilities incorporated as identified in the assessment criteria is all that is required.

Some centres appear to be taking a very structured approach to this strand. As already mentioned this negates the students' opportunity for independence - required to access the higher mark bands. There were examples of entire cohorts using the same structure including adding unnecessary fields, identical input masks, lookups and validation; creating generic queries and presenting exactly the same output. It is good to note that at this series there were no reported examples of edited and abbreviated versions of the provided datasets being used.

Often, one of the main weaknesses in the evidence presented was in respect of testing. There were few good examples of comprehensive testing of the empty structure, including the relationships, prior to importing the dataset. Some of the testing had undoubtedly been carried out after the tables had been populated. Direct evidence of importing the provided data to the created structure was also often omitted.

The evidencing of interrogating the system is haphazard. Often there were no design views, frequently one type of query was used several times and evidence of use of more than one table was limited in many portfolios. More use of search criteria, not just count and sum, and the relational aspects of the database would be expected to support some of the high marks awarded.

Comments on strand (e)

This strand is primarily about the database and its performance; large numbers of students documented and evaluated the other strands and / or their presentation portfolio.

Innumerable students submitted first person commentaries on the creation of their database rather than evaluating the performance of the finished artefact in terms of the relationships, input masks, validation etc.

There were many examples of students awarded MB2 with no reference to any feedback in their evaluative comments. Listing feedback and not using it does not address MB2.

Again, in the evaluation of their own performance, students often commented on what they had done, usually well, with little or no evaluative content.

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