

Moderators' Report/ Principal Moderator Feedback

Summer 2016

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

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General Comments

Work across the whole range was moderated at this series; a good number of total marks in the 50s were confirmed and there was some accurate centre assessment.

6952 is one of the mandatory core units. The requirements are well established, in the public domain and clearly defined in the unit specification. The assessment criteria indicate the primary focus of the work to be submitted and the assessment guidance documents explain how and where marks are accessible and to be awarded.

Numerous examples of over-lenient assessment and high marks being awarded without the necessary supporting evidence were reported. This was particularly noticeable in respect of strand (d) and, to a lesser extent, strands (a) and (e).

Some centres are still taking a very structured approach to the unit, including the use of writing frames and / or topic lists for some strands. As a result, the material submitted is often very similar across an entire cohort. This approach reflects on independence of working and disadvantages the students; it is neither expected nor acceptable at this level of qualification.

Immediately upon completion of the moderation, individual reports are written for centres identifying weaknesses in the assessment. It is disappointing to note that all too often points raised in those reports recur in work submitted, the issues not having 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 did 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 spec but some neglected to consider the transactional aspects of the site, ie 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 abler students evaluated the features in relation to the design of the site which is what is expected.

Regularly, high marks were awarded where the level of detail in the descriptions and / or the range of features considered did not support the mark. Some students concentrated 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 lenient with MB2 or above being 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 - leading up to the checkout. The main omissions and weaknesses were, again, the back-office processes and flows of information in and out of the organisation. Stock and payment 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 was usually addressed well by students; but often little understanding or relevance of associated legislation was shown. Assessment was frequently slightly lenient with a recurring example being top MB2 awarded based on descriptive content rather than the expected consideration of the effectiveness of both protective measures and legislation.

Material sufficiently comprehensive to address MB3 was seldom seen.

Comments on strand d

Whether or not due to incomplete database work or merely omission of the requisite evidence, without doubt the largest mark adjustments are made in strand (d) - because the material submitted fails to map to the requirements. Despite the longevity of the qualification and the detail in every principal's report, there are large numbers of centres that seem unaware of the specifics of this strand.

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

As in previous series and despite innumerable reports, some centres are 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.

Elements of design – ERD, data dictionaries – were often omitted entirely from student portfolios and there were some obvious gaps in the evidence of creating the tables. Detail of incorporating customisation – input masks, look ups, validation – was usually well documented but there were few good examples of comprehensive testing of the empty structure, including the relationships, prior to importing the dataset. Frequently the testing had clearly been carried out after the tables had been populated. Direct evidence of importing the provided data to the created structure was also often sparse and checking the data after import barely mentioned.

The evidencing of interrogating the system was regularly a notable weakness. Often there were no design views of queries, 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 group with count or 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 although there was 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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