



Pearson

Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2017

Pearson Edexcel GCE Applied in Information
and Communication Technology (6952)

The Digital Economy

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General Comments

Work across the entire range was moderated in this examination series. A good number of total marks in the 50s were confirmed and it is pleasing to be able to report that there were some accurate centre assessments. A Considerable amount of high centre marks were confirmed.

The requirements for this mandatory AS unit are well established in the public domain and 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 should be awarded.

Notwithstanding the accurate assessment mentioned above, there were still numerous examples of over-generous assessments and high centre marks being awarded without the necessary supporting evidence. This was particularly noticeable in respect of strands (d) and (e).

Immediately upon completion of the moderation of a sample of work, a report is prepared for the centre identifying issues and inaccuracies in assessment. It is essential to report the frequency with which centres are failing to address previously reported issues across the whole unit. The candidates work seen suggest that some centres fail to realise the main requirements of this unit, particularly in relation to the nature and content of strand (d). Centres are advised to access the mechanisms and support systems in place to guide candidates into achieving higher marks.

A high volume of centres are still taking a very structured approach to the unit, including the use of headings / 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 can disadvantage candidates.

Strand A

The quality of work for this strand is undoubtedly improving. Some very good reports were submitted and many candidates secured well deserved MB3 marks.

On a whole, the sites chosen varied across a cohort as expected. Unfortunately, there are instances where candidates choose unsuitable or inappropriate sites and thus are not afforded 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 are far from ideal and should be discouraged.

Most candidates 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 candidates 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 candidates concentrate on the products and content of the site rather than features of the site's design. There were instances of QWC not addressed by the candidate or noted in the assessment record by the centres assessor.

Strand B

Many candidates 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, as previously reported, 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.

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

Strand C

Although still brief bulleted lists are presented, the descriptive content in respect of both threats and protective measures is usually well done. However, many candidates still appear to have little understanding of the relevance of associated legislation and its inclusion is required, even at MB1. Assessment is regularly generous with the most frequently recurring issue being top MB2 awarded based on the descriptive content rather than the expected and required consideration of the effectiveness of both protective measures and legislation.

Material sufficiently comprehensive to address MB3 is seldom seen.

Strand D

Assessment of this strand is regularly very generous and is the majority of any mark adjustments made on the unit are in this strand. More often than not, this is because the material submitted fails to map to the requirements. Despite the longevity of the qualification, there are numerous centres / candidates that seem unaware of the specific requirements of this strand and either fail to undertake the necessary database work or merely omit the requisite evidence.

Step by step software specific instructions in respect of the creation and implementation of their database is neither required nor necessary. Screenshots documenting the various aspects and facilities incorporated in the sequence identified in the assessment criteria is the basis of the material expected.

Some centres appear to be taking a very structured approach to this strand, particularly in respect of the interrogation of the database, queries etc. As mentioned this negates the candidates' opportunity for independence - required to access the higher mark bands. There were examples in this examination series of individually created, small, datasets being used rather than one of those provided.

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 often disorganised and not of a high standard. 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.

Strand E

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

Innumerable candidates submitted 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 candidates 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, candidates often commented on what they had done, usually well, with little or no evaluative content.

