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Examiners' Report/
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2015

Pearson Edexcel GCE
In Applied ICT (6957)
Paper 01 Using Database Software

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General Comments

It was pleasing to see that the majority of students took into account the clear instructions in the examination paper with regards to the ordering of evidence and the printouts required. It is understandable that some students may need to produce more than the minimum prints required in Activity 3 but the best advice, as shown by many students, is keep to the task specified and keep it simple.

It is apparent that a lot of students are taking on board comments made in previous reports with regards to marks that are lost because of poor screenshots with the majority ensuring screenshots were clear. However, there are still some who either crop screenshots too much missing off names of tables, numbers of records on datasheets, truncating macro screenshots, etc, and of printing them out too small or with poor print quality making the evidence illegible.

It is probably worthwhile reiterating here what is deemed acceptable with regards to help and assistance before and during the exam period. The teacher's job is to prepare the student for the exam by developing the **technical skills** necessary to create a database at this level. The scenario is released prior to the examination. Teachers are allowed and encouraged to discuss with their students possible answers to the questions. The scenario had very clear tasks in order to aid this process. At this point the teacher does not know the final construction of the dataset so that any datasets they give to their students for practice can only be guesswork.

Once the teacher becomes aware of what is in the live data files they should no longer discuss the examination in context although they are allowed to discuss with the students aspects of databases in general terms.

For example they can revise the generation of primary keys as long as the examination data files are not used as an example. The data file(s) in any examination contain data that the students have to accept as being the way we want it. It is up to them how they cope with any anomalies that may be present. This is true of any 'live' situation in the real world where they would have to make their own decisions about how to proceed. Students are not required to create any new fields, they should use all and only what they have been given.

Administration

On the whole administration is sound but there are still some students losing one or two marks by not assembling the tasks in the correct order or, where they are in the correct order, attaching them to the answer booklet incorrectly. When the examiner opens the booklet they should be greeted with activity 1 facing toward them ready to mark; this is not always the case i.e. when the examiner opens the booklet they are faced with the back of the Activity 6 or the work hole punched in the right-hand corner as opposed to left. This adds to the time taken to mark an examination paper. Very few students do not ensure their name; centre number, etc is present on every print though it does still occur.

Activity 1

It was expected that this question would be well answered and in many instances, it was. However, there were quite a few students who achieved very few of the marks.

Part A required the **identification** of one additional task and **who** it supported. This was generally well answered though some responses were too generalised to be acceptable as relating to this particular scenario.

Part B required the **identification** of a role not included in the prototype tasks and **two** tasks this role would need to carry out. Where students identified the correct role i.e. the Head of Student Services, they tended to give reasonable tasks associated with that role. On the whole it was well answered when the role was correctly identified.

Part C was well answered. Many students realised that the Data Protection Act would need to be taken into account and that different levels of access would be required. However, not many thought of the need for different read and write permissions though it was pleasing to see that some did.

Activity 2

On the whole this question was well answered.

A lot of student managed to pick up all the marks for Part A with tables for tutor, teacher, student and issue though some did add in further tables which were not required.

For Part B many realised there was no need to link the personal tutor to the issues table as the link between the personal tutor and student would suffice. The majority of students did pick up the mark for the correct primary keys in the tables.

In Part C, most students realised a range check would be required on the number of subjects field. However, quite a few did not take into account the wording in the scenario that a student may study **up to five** subjects moving to **three or four** in the second year. Quite a number used a range

check of between 3 and 5 which did not cover all of the aforementioned possibilities.

Part D, if marks were lost here it was generally down to either the use of incorrect tables or not ensuring the number of records could be clearly seen.

Activity 3

Activity 3 is all about the **design view** aspects of building the forms and generating the processes. Students should be discouraged from including screenshots showing the system in use as that is explicitly tested in Activity 4 and can detract from the evidence required in Activity 3.

Where Activity 3 had been attempted all students built the log in form and it was pleasing to see the many different methods student had used to validate the username and password. All viable methods attracted marks providing the examiner could find the evidence.

The majority of students secured marks in Part C with many achieving full marks. Where marks were lost it tended to be down to truncation of either the criteria or the field names.

Part D was quite well answered with many achieving the marks for ensuring it linked to the personal tutor logged in, the total number of issues per student and concatenation. However, some did not show evidence of the ascending sort and did not attempt the generation of closed and open issues. Many did not include the evidence of changing the join type which would have allowed students with no issues at all to appear in the query results.

Most students evidenced all or some of Part E though some did not include the evidence for the prevention of changing data.

Part F was very well documented with the majority of students achieving this mark.

With regards to Part G it was apparent that some students were attempting to solve the problem using a form that only showed one of the issues per student. The paper clearly said **issues** as opposed to issue. Where students had ensured an overview of all issues could be seen then they usually achieved the majority of, if not all, marks.

Part H was very well evidenced though, at times, student did not ensure the issue description field was sized appropriately.

Part I was also well evidenced overall.

In general it was great to see how well this activity was attempted and the many different methods of achieving the requirements. The only real issue is that some student still do not realise that if they want the marks on offer they must ensure the examiner can clearly see the evidence. It is worthwhile asking themselves the question – *'if I did not know how this had been done,*

would I be able to work it out from the screenshots I have provided?' - This does not mean lots of annotations / screenshots have to be present. Indeed, we try to guide the student into the screenshots we want. However, if what we have asked for does not fully show what they have done they should include more. The top and bottom of it is it means have I included all of my queries, have I included evidence of every part of formulae used, are my query columns wide enough, are my screenshots clear to see, etc.

Activity 4

Overall, the students did well on this activity with many achieving full marks.

Parts A and B were very well evidenced. Part C less so. Where marks were lost it tended to be down to miscopying the Issue Comments provided.

Activity 5

This activity was well attempted and evidenced on the whole with many students achieving all of the marks for Part A and Part B. Grouping tended to be used very effectively.

In order to achieve the first C mark, students had to ensure the report was fit for purpose. Many students still do not ensure labels are suitable i.e. spaces between words etc.

Activity 6

It was very nice to see that the majority of students had taken note of what was asked of them in the examination paper. Careful consideration ensured their evaluation reflected this with some excellent, well thought evaluations, raising some very good points about future functionality and the need for another table that would resolve the issue of the potential many to many relationship between issues and comments. However, others still see it as an opportunity to talk about how well they have completed the examination questions or give a running commentary of what they did to build it. To reiterate, the first part of the evaluation should see the student evaluate how well their database carries out the tasks from the scenario. The second should see them discuss further functionality. Please stress to students that we do not want to see screenshots of how they have built aspects. We have already seen that in Activity 3 and students can waste a lot of valuable time doing this.

Grade Boundaries

Grade boundaries for this, and all other papers, can be found on the website on this link:

http://www.edexcel.com/iwantto/Pages/grade-boundaries.aspx

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