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# **Examiners' Report**

## Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2017

Pearson Edexcel GCE Applied in Information  
and Communication Technology (6957)

Using Database Software

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## General Comments

It was pleasing to see that the majority of candidates 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 candidates may need to produce more than the minimum prints required in Activity 3, however, is it advised to keep to the task specified and to keep it simple. This was shown by many candidates.

It is apparent that a lot of candidates are taking on board comments made in previous reports with regards to marks that are lost due to 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. There were also printing which were 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 candidates 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 possible answers to the questions with their students. 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 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 candidates 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. Candidates 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 candidates losing one or two Standard Ways of Working marks in the paper 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 see Activity 1 facing toward them ready to mark. This is not always the case and in some cases, when the examiner opens the booklet they are faced with the back of Activity 6 or the work hole punched in the right-hand corner as opposed to left. Very few candidates do not ensure that 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 it was pleasing to see that, in many instances, it was. However, there were quite a few candidates who achieved very few of the marks.

Where marks were lost it tended to be because candidates did not answer the question and gave tasks relevant to the boarding of dogs or because the wording of the steps was vague or because candidates had ticked multiple columns for the step.

## **Activity 2**

There was a range of solutions put forward for this activity.

In the case of some, it was clear candidates were trying to make the number of tables / relationships fit the marks awarded. In this exam paper, four of the basic tables were required for one of the marks in Part A and four in Part B.

The majority of candidates had included tables for Owners, Dogs, Activities, Packages and Boarding Visits. Few had determined that there needed to be a Boarding Activities table and fewer candidates realised that there needed to be a Package Cost table.

For Part B, most candidates picked up the marks for the single primary keys. Fewer picked up the marks for the composite key. There are still instances of candidates not enforcing referential integrity meaning marks were lost. The majority of candidates achieved the mark for using correct data types.

Whilst the majority of candidates did pick up the presence check mark in Part C, there are still candidates putting a presence check on a primary key, which is not suitable. Quite a few candidates did not achieve the mark for a table lookup as they did not use a table lookup they used a value combo box.

In 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 about the **design view** aspects of building the forms and generating the processes. Candidates 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 the activity had been attempted, all candidates created the Owner form, though some did not create the menu too, even though a design to follow for the menu was provided. Many candidates achieved all the marks in parts A to D, with many different methods shown in terms of generating the primary keys. It is still worth reiterating that examiners have to be sure the primary keys would 'save' in order to award the marks. For example, if auto numbers have been used in Activity 2, we would expect to see screenshots of the table design put forward here and a save command in the code / macro. If a bound form is used and the keys have been generated by default then a save command in the code / macro is sufficient. If unbound forms are used then we expect to see the design of append queries (not truncated) and the said query being run in the code / macro or alternative method that works.

Most candidates achieved the marks for Part E, opening the owners form from the menu ready for data entry. Where marks were lost here it tended to be because it could not be determined that the code / macro was running from the button on the menu or the form was not opened for data entry.

Most candidates achieved the marks for Part F, though some quite clearly used two different forms, which was not what was required or could not change the visibility of the combo box.

A lot of candidates answered Part G well, though it was surprising how many candidates did not follow the design given and lost marks. In terms of row sources, many candidates lost marks because they had cropped the screenshots so far that it could not be determined what control the row source belonged to. Others lost marks because combo boxes / text boxes were inappropriately named e.g Combo48. At this level, candidates should be naming objects sensibly. Examiners did not award marks unless it was clear what object was being referred to. The same applies to the formula for the number of dogs, costs etc. Formula such as Text12\*Text13\*Text14 are not appropriate and did not merit any marks.

### **Activity 4**

Overall, the candidates did well on this activity with many achieving full marks though it was surprising to see how many candidates did not achieve the first A mark – a blank form with two suitable primary key numbers.

Most achieved Part B and less of Part C. Some candidates did not pick up on the fact that the age could only be either in years or months but not both.

Part D was well answered, particularly by those who had created a suitable subform (one to many). Where marks were lost it was usually down to candidates only being able to show one dog at a time and not taking the time to ensure all dogs were present.

## **Activity 5**

This activity was well attempted and evidenced on the whole with quite a lot of candidates achieving full marks.

In Part A, most candidates ensured the query was not truncated and that all criteria etc could be seen.

Part B expected candidates to realise that grouping by either surname of forename etc was not suitable and that the report should have been grouped by OwnerID. The majority of candidates did do this.

Part C expected candidates to ensure the layout and formatting of the reports was fit for purpose. This included suitable labels which is where many students lost the mark.

## **Activity 6**

The majority of candidates had taken note of what was asked of them in the examination paper and carefully ensured their evaluation reflected this with some excellent, well thought evaluations. Some very good points about future functionality were raised. 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. Centres are advised to stress to candidates that screenshots of how they have built aspects is not credit worthy here. We have already seen that in Activity 3 and candidates can waste a lot of valuable time doing this.

