Examiners' Report
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2017

Pearson Edexcel GCE Applied in Information and Communication Technology (6959)

Communications and Networks

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Comments on individual questions

Activity 1 – Types of network, components of a network

1(a) - A poster that explains PAN, LAN, WAN.

Most candidates were able to produce a reasonable poster, although a significant minority simply wrote a typical answer of paragraphs and diagrams. Others produced an adequate poster but with little or no context.

1(b) - A poster that explains the route that a document follows from the school to the Ministry.

This part of the question was not answered to a high standard. Most candidates concentrated on the technical details of packets, rather than looking at the route taken by the document. There was very little reference to 'the pieces of equipment and transmission media that the document passes through', even though this was explicitly asked for in the question.

Activity 2 – Research, network design

A report for Viro on an 'everything-in-one-box' solutions.

This was the research question and most candidates were able to find solutions to the given problem within the specified price points.

Candidates were generally better at sourcing and pricing hardware than software. Higher ability candidates candidates were able to produce a full solution, under budget and with explanations of why the chosen items were suitable in the scenario context.

Activity 3 – Network management – system configuration

3(a) - A five point plan for placing WiFi antenna.

On the whole, this activity was well answered. Most candidates were able to identify several factors which adversely affect WiFi transmission and could explain how to place an antenna to mitigate the effects. Lower ability candidates tended to repeat themselves, e.g. giving two or three examples of signal obstruction or signal interference.

3 (b) - A guidance sheet for setting up DHCP.

This half of the activity proved difficult for many candidates. Very few used any context, i.e. referring to the scenario. Most of those that were able to explain DHCP seem to have taken a generic account from a website and rewritten it as a plan, or simply as paragraphs.

Activity 4 – Network design

A design for the network with notes justifying each major decision.

Most diagrams were clear and well labelled, although many candidates lost marks by not indicating locations. There were still instances of servers being used as hubs and of printers being attached to individual PCs rather than networked as needed. In the case of WiFi connected devices, the links were often left out entirely.

The upgraded electrical system was only tackled by a small number of candidates.

As in previous examination series, the notes justifying each major decision regarding the positioning of network devices and equipment, frequently ended up being notes describing the layout or repeating what the case study said should be done.

Activity 5 – Network management – policy documents

5(a) - An explanation of white lists / black lists, ISP filtering, and DNS filtering.

This was poorly answered by most candidates. Answers tended to be related to various types of spam filtering rather than the context given in the scenario. It is clear that many of the answers were simply a rehashed version of a website explaining anti-spam measures. Presumably the candidates involved searched for keywords and used the first thing they found.

5(b) - A description of a viable method for controlling what the pupils see.

Few candidates scored on this question. Mainly because most of them had gone down the anti-spam route in 5(a).

Standard Ways of Working

Most candidates gained both available marks. A handful of candidates lost one mark, and in a couple of cases, two marks by including extra pages.

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