Examiners' Report

June 2010

Information Technology Level 2 Controlled Assessments

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Contents

Principal Examiners' Report

Principal Learning – Information Technology - Level 2

Level 2 Unit 2 – Exploring Organisations

General Comments

There has been a continued improvement in the quality of work submitted for this unit, with some excellent submissions made. However there are also some instances of optimistic assessment based on minimal work.

The controlled assessment time for this unit is 20 hours and it is to be expected that the work submitted should bear some relationship to this time period. Some work clearly did not represent this time limit, in some cases being far too brief and in other cases clearly taking many weeks from the learners own accounts.

As previously mentioned in January's report, success in this unit depends upon a good choice of organisations to study, which must be real and studied either by a visit or a visiting speaker. Where centres have followed this approach work covered all the mark bands and showed good depth and detail. The evidence of this moderation window confirms that this is the best approach to follow.

A few centres continue to submit studies of themselves with the usual problem of learners struggling to identify the key business processes within an educational institution and again a request is made to study an organisation external to the school or college.

There were a few instances of learners studying their own student business enterprise, and centres are reminded that this approach is not permitted and will not be credited in future.

Centres are reminded that they should play a business simulation game for LO4. This game would typically last about 1 hour. There continues to be instances of learners engaging in a business enterprise task covering many weeks which is inappropriate.
Most submissions were paper based, but it was pleasing to see some centres submitting the work electronically in imaginative ways.

LO.1 Organisational Structures, Cultures and Roles

Some excellent work on the Structure Culture and Roles of the two organisations studied with many learners achieving high marks, with many learners clearly relating this to the organisations objectives.
There is a small concern that this success is at the cost of the remaining work and centres are encouraged to remind learners that this unit of work should occupy approximately 3 to 4 hours maximum.

LO.2,3 Technology-enabled Business Processes

A considerable improvement in coverage of Key Business Processes (KBP) but the coverage of the supporting technology still leaves a lot of room to improve. Many centres are requiring learners to cover both organisations for this task when the preferred approach is to select one organisation from the two studied for LO1, choosing the organisation best

suited to exemplify each KBP so that the account might switch between organisations as each KBP is considered.

It was pleasing to see that more learners appear to have a good understanding of the difference between service delivery and supplier management, although a few still manage to confuse the two.

Coverage of the supporting technology continues to improve with many accounts offering in depth detail on the software and hardware used to deliver the KBP. Centres are reminded that it is recommended that half the marks for this LO be awarded for discussion of the technologies used.

LO.4 Business Success

Again an area where many learners scored high marks, most centres approaching the task correctly and learners making their recommendations for business success supported by evidence of playing their business simulation game. There continues to be a wide variety of games chosen and most appear to be both entertaining and informative.

There were less instances centres taking the 'starting a new business' approach which makes it difficult to obtain full marks and hopefully this approach will now disappear. There were a few instances as mentioned in the introduction, of centre basing this strand on a student business enterprise, and they are reminded that such an approach could not practically fit within the 20 hours controlled assessment time.

Conclusion

A continued improvement in approach to the assessment and quality of the work is clearly evident and this unit now provides good opportunities for high achievement.

Principal Examiners' Report

Principal Learning – Information Technology - Level 2

Level 2 Unit 3 – Effective Communication

General Comments

The evidence submitted by centres for this unit has continued to improve, with some very interesting work being produced. However there are still some instances of optimistic assessment based on minimal work.

LO.1 Communication Media and Choice of business-related Communication

In the first part of this learning outcome learners are required to explain the three main types of communication media used in a business context and to give examples of their use. To gain higher level marks learners must also comment on their benefits and limitations. Many learners gave reasonable descriptions of the three types of business media but failed to apply the knowledge in a business context and subsequently marks were limited to the lower mark band. Where the learners had used business contexts they often showed good understanding of the benefits and limitations.

In this learning outcome learners must also comment on their choice of business-related communications used for the team task; the majority of learners made appropriate comments however they should be encouraged to develop their comments to explain and justify their choice of business-related communications in order to achieve higher marks.

LO.2 Making Yourself Clear

In this series the learners submitted a wide variety of different communications ranging from videos and radio adverts to catalogues, posters, letters and emails. The electronic submission by a number of centres made the moderation process interesting and allowed the learners work to be accurately assessed.

The communications produced were in the main appropriate and consistent, however, there was generally scope for learners to further develop the work to improve the effectiveness of the communication and access the higher mark bands.

In the majority of submissions it was clear that learners had worked well together to produce group communications and this was often reflected in the team plans produced for Learning Outcome 3. However in some instances it was difficult to identify which communications had been produced by an individual and, where learners had worked collaboratively, it was difficult to identify an individual's contribution.

LO.3 & LO.4 Set-up and Record Keeping

As in previous series the quality of the plans and diaries submitted varied greatly. It is essential that planning is up-front and not produced retrospectively. The team plan may be produced collectively, but the tracking process must be done on an individual basis.

The work rarely provided the detail required for Mark Band 3, to be assessed in this band learners must provide initial team plans with detailed notes to track progress throughout the project. In addition the diaries should include detailed notes on the work done by the team at the planning stage, decisions made during the project and comments on the individual's contribution to team work.

LO.3 & LO.5 Judging Performance

The comments made were often sensible and well considered, in both the evaluation of their own performance and that of the team; however learners often failed to mention feedback given to and received from others. At the higher level the learners should be evaluating both their own and the team's performance.
All learners should be encouraged to consider the impact of behaviour and attitude on the performance of the team; however, in order to achieve the higher level marks there must be a full evaluation of the impact with sensible suggestions for improvement.

Principal Examiners' Report

Principal Learning – Information Technology - Level 2

Level 2 Unit 4 – Skills for Innovation

General Comments

The work from some centres at this moderation showed the same issues and problems that had arisen in January and I am therefore opening this report with the same general observations that were made in January's report.

The use of witness statements is confined to Mark Grid B and therefore to the learner's performance in giving their Proposal for LO.3. It is not possible to ascribe credit in LO.1 or LO.2 through the use of witness statements.

It is vital that the challenge/opportunity set is simple and open to numerical interpretation. It is also important that the task is set in the context of a clearly defined challenge preferably with some pre-identified success factors against which learners can make judgements. It has become evident that learners find this assessment more manageable if they have an overall budget to work to.

The challenge or opportunity must be set in a clear business context.

Further to these comments from the January window the following observations are made to assist centres.

In LO.3 the learner must submit their 'Proposal' which might be a powerpoint, a report or other documents/evidence that conveys the learners recommendations, as evidence for Mark Grid A.
The use of the word 'Presentation' in LO.3 mark Grid B refers to the giving of their 'Proposal' to the client and not to any physical document or powerpoint.
 The evidence of the process of accumulating the evidence and making initial recommendations for LO.1 may not also be credited in LO.3. The Proposal is an independent document arising from the investigation process in LO.1.
In some cases learners have tackled this as a team task. Whilst it is quite acceptable for learners to share as a team the gathering of evidence, this is the only area of acceptable team evidence. The spreadsheets processing this evidence, the initial conclusions for LO.1 and the Proposal for LO.3 must be unique to the learner. Each learner needs to be able to present a variety of options and then to make a preferred recommendation based on their spreadsheet analysis. All evidence must be clearly attributable to individual learners. Centres are reminded that this is a controlled assessment task over a period of, typically, 20 hours. Some substantial submissions were received that were clearly the product of a much greater time allocation and did not comply with the controlled assessment requirements.

LO.1 Investigation - Nature and Scope of the Challenge/Opportunity

Few learners introduced their task with an outline of how they propose to approach their investigation. Centres are advised to refer to the guidance for allocating marks which indicates that marks should be allocated for exploring the challenge or opportunity.

For credit in MB2 and MB3 the learners must have used a variety of sources of information. This might include interviewing the client to ascertain any preferences or additional criteria, interviewing appropriate persons who might offer an insight into the best option, such as an IT technician for a networking task, investigating prices across a range of sources such as the internet, magazine and newspaper advertising, in-store prices and offers. Learners should not solely rely upon internet research.

Learners should be aware that typically they are investigating a commercial challenge and that domestic offers and prices may not be appropriate or even permissible in a business context. This was particularly evident in learners investigating domestic internet service providers for a commercial business.

For MB2 and MB3 spreadsheets should show some degree of sophistication. A series of spreadsheets that simply add up a few figures for a single option are only appropriate to MB1. Preferably spreadsheets should be designed to allow a user to amend details of price, equipment choice etc and to view the resulting outcome, use should be made of spreadsheet features that simplify this task and highlight poor or good choices.

Centres are requested to submit the spreadsheet as digital evidence so that they can be 'tried out' by the moderator.

This LO concludes with a requirement for learners to summarise their findings and to reach some initial conclusions that they will use as the basis for their proposal in LO.3.

LO.2 Legal and Other Constraints

This is still poorly understood by learners. They are only looking at legal and other constraints that are pertinent to the challenge they are investigating, a wide ranging account of legal issues is not appropriate. Accounts should be focused and clearly related to the challenge and should be a good balance of legal and other issues. Other issues that could be considered are environmental, ethical, social, moral, planning, insurance, accessibility, site and location specific, technical etc.

LO.3 Proposal

As mentioned earlier the Proposal may be a powerpoint or document and should be something that can be presented to the client with a suitable recommendation from the learner. This evidence must be submitted for moderation and cannot be replaced with a witness statement.

Principal Examiners' Report

Principal Learning – Information Technology - Level 2

Level 2 Unit 5 – Technology Systems

General Comments

The database sections of this unit were generally better addressed by learners with evidence for LO.1 Network Components often missing some of the key areas required for higher marks.

The unit divides into the 2 areas of networks and databases and the comments below address these separately.

Networks

In general, a suggestion for the completion of this task is to provide learners with a scenario/client for the network that they will assemble and later review. By doing so, learners will be able to address a number of the LOs more specifically ie LO.3, Business Continuity and LO.5 Review of the Network.

LO.1 Network Components

The majority of learners achieved marks within MB2 because they failed to give a *good* explanation of the function of key network components. Where marks were lost, it was because learners omitted details on the **function** of these components. Many centres had obviously referred to the specification and met the requirement of identifying the *key* network components.

One suggestion for the completion of this LO is to ask learners to produce a guide for others (the client) that explains the function of key network components.

LO.2 Network Assembly, Testing and Troubleshooting

This LO is entirely assessed by the centre using Mark Grid B.

LO.3 Business Continuity

To address this LO, the learner should consider and describe key factors that are important to a business with respect to keeping its network running. MB2 and above specifically requires the learner to describe measures for: **appropriate** file structures, security and backup. This does not mean that learners cannot include **other** measures to safeguard continuity, but they **must** include the areas mentioned to achieve MB2 or MB3. MB3 requires a detailed description of each measure; this requires learners to give an overview of the proposed measure ie "anti virus software should be installed to prevent against threats …", but they must also suggest an actual *strategy* that a business should consider and in this example, perhaps go onto recommend an AV product, suggest how often the client should check for updates and how they should set scans to run. The same approach applies to all key areas of safeguarding business continuity.

In many instances, learners missed out on the higher mark band because they failed to give suggestions of how a business could implement each specific measure.

LO.5 Review of the Network

The key aspect for this LO is that the learner is required to review the network that they have assembled and tested in LO.2. The 'How you will be assessed' section of the specification clearly states that the review is of 'your network' and this section of the specification also offers useful guidance in that the review 'should assess fitness for purpose and identify areas for improvement'.

Network reviews were generally weak, with few learners making any reference to the original aims in terms of audience and purpose. Often, learners simply **described** the process of assembling their network rather than evaluating its success and describing how it had met its original aims.

Feedback from others was often included, although the relevance of much of this feedback was of little value. Where feedback is sought, for the higher mark bands it clearly add value to the process of evaluating the network.

Database

LO.4 Database structure, Automation, Information Retrieval

Centres generally addressed this LO well, with many learners achieving marks in MB2 or MB3. The key feature of the higher mark bands is that the database produced clearly demonstrates a good sense of audience and purpose. This will be evidenced through: a database structure which uses data types and validation appropriate to the scenario, a data entry form which clearly takes into account the end-user, and finally, reports that are of a good standard and are fit for purpose.

Learners should be encouraged to include a brief introduction about who the database is for and the key requirements for the system. This would make it far easier to subsequently evidence that they have produced an **effective** database which provides a structure, forms, reports, and macros etc which show a **good sense** of their audience.

Once the learner has provided evidence that their database does evidence a good sense of audience and purpose, they are able to access marks up to the maximum of 24 within MB3.

This is a 'high scoring' LO and learners should be made fully aware of this.

It is **not** a requirement for learners to show **how** they have set up their database, validation, created a form etc but it would be a expected that they setup suitable fields with sensible data types and field properties etc and then explain **why** this is appropriate for their audience and/or purpose. Marks are awarded for the final outcomes which must demonstrate fitness for purpose; they are not awarded for the process involved in creating these outcomes.

LO.5 Review of the Database

As with the Review of the Network, writing an evaluative review is a weakness with many learners. Reviews were generally descriptive with little or no reference back to their initial aims and audience.

For higher marks, in addition to evaluative comments, learners must also make sensible suggestions for improvement. Simple and non-specific comments such as 'add more records' is not a sensible suggestion for improvement. However, a comment such as 'improve the appearance of my data entry form by adding the company logo and a command button to print…..' would be judged sensible.

Principal Examiners' Report

Principal Learning – Information Technology - Level 2

Level 2 Unit 6 – Multimedia

General Comments

There are two parts to this unit; firstly to consider and evaluate the uses of multimedia in business and then, to design and create at least two multimedia products.

In the first part, learners could explain in general terms how and why multimedia is used, and then choose two or three multimedia products to review. It should be noted that the specification states 'different uses' and therefore when selecting products to review they **must** have different purposes. Two websites which advertise products **are not** different uses; however, two websites, one to advertise and another to allow online purchasing do demonstrate different uses. Centres are advised to refer to the specification for details on the various 'uses' of multimedia which learners could consider.

The second part of the unit, requires the learner to design, develop, and evaluate at least two multimedia products. It is important to recognise that the **design** detail is equally as important as the subsequent **development** and **testing** of the products.

For this series, centres have not been penalised in cases where learners have not designed and created the minimum two products. However, in all future series, learners must produce **at least two products** as per the specification. Centres are to note that this does not require two distinct products; for example, it could be a short video (including text, sound and images) embedded within a webpage – the key requirement is that **both** products are in fact multimedia.

LO.1 Uses of Multimedia

Many learners selected examples of multimedia in business which did not display different uses which reduced marks. In some cases, the subsequent reviews of the products gave only brief consideration to the design features used, with their main focus being on simply reviewing the products. The actual requirements of the LO are to explain the uses of multimedia in business, assessing fitness for purpose, and then to evaluate the effectiveness of the **design features** such as, navigation, animation, sound etc. The explanation of **how these features** contribute to the product's suitability for the audience and purpose is required to gain marks outside MB1.

Often learners lost marks because they simply reviewed the product and mentioned 'superficial' features such as the colours and layout of a website rather than actual multimedia features.

LO.2 Design, Development and Testing

This is a high scoring LO and learners should be aware that this LO carries the majority of marks for the entire unit with a maximum of 36 out of the total 60 being available.

As previously mentioned, the requirement is for **at least two** multimedia products to be designed and created.

In many cases, weak designs restricted the marks that could be awarded. For MB3, the requirement is a 'complete set of upfront designs'. The keywords here are **complete** set and **upfront**, implying that the designs should allow a 3rd party to create the products from the designs given. Many learners produced only annotated sketches whereas a timeline or structure diagram would often improve and add to the detail in the designs considerably.

For the higher mark bands, design sketches should have detailed notes specifying font face, font size, colour, image details (description of or filename) and other relevant information. There is no set rule to exactly **what** evidence the learner must provide for a design as this will vary depending upon the products being developed. The key factor is that whatever design information is given, it should allow 3rd party implementation in order to achieve the top mark band.

It is **essential that** electronic evidence of the actual multimedia products is included with the sample sent in for moderation. Without this evidence moderation cannot take place.

Although evidence of testing is not specifically required, it is implicit in the requirement to 'meet all of the specified requirements'. Testing should be based on initial product objectives and intended audience. It would also be beneficial if centres encourage learners to test the final product on CD rather than on the network which can lead to a mismatch in testing evidence and the actual products provided.

LO.3 Evaluation

For all mark bands the evaluation of the two products should consider feedback from reviewers. To achieve MB3 it is expected that comments gathered from reviewers will be specific and based upon targeted questions that do assess the degree to which the products are suitable for their intended audience and purpose. Having gained feedback, learners should be analysing the feedback received and making comments based upon their findings. High scoring evaluations should give a realistic assessment of the final products, and should include at least one justified and sensible suggestion for improvement.

Principal Examiners' Report

Principal Learning – Information Technology - Level 2

Level 2 Unit 7 – Managing Projects

LO.1 Successful Project Management

In this Learning Outcome learners are required to investigate two IT projects, one successful and one unsuccessful; careful selection of the projects is critical to the success of the learners.

In some instances learners looked at two unsuccessful projects, restricting the marks that could be awarded.

Learners should be encouraged to research Industry Standard IT projects that include stated objectives and outcomes; this will allow them to more readily identify factors that lead to the project's success or failure. The key success factors and reasons for failure that learners need to focus on are identified in the 'What you need to cover' section of the specification.

Investigations were often carried out via the internet and whilst this in itself is not unacceptable the learners must collect sufficient information to allow them to describe in some detail the projects studied. Many learners gave the briefest of information and often focussed on non-IT problems which had arisen.

As in the previous series the majority of learners produced 'hints and tips' which were often vague. To be awarded marks in the higher mark bands the descriptions of the projects must include objectives and outcomes and the 'hints and tips' should reflect on what has been learned from the projects studied in the first part of the learning outcome.

LO.2 Project Proposal and Project Plan

In this learning outcome learners are required to produce a project proposal and a project plan for a small-scale IT project. In this instance it is acceptable to use a project that the learner is going to carry out and Unit 6 provides an acceptable choice. However it is essential that the work for the two units is produced and submitted separately. Many learners successfully used their Unit 6 work, but others were clearly confused and this was reflected in the quality of the work submitted.

In this learning outcome learners can be given support to produce proposals and plans to gain marks in the lower mark bands, however to be awarded marks in Mark Band 3 they must work independently; very few centres indicated the level of support given.

Many of the project proposals submitted were of a good standard. Centres are advised to refer to the 'What you need to cover' section of the specification to ensure that all areas of the project proposal are covered; using these headings as the basis of the proposal provides learners with a structure for their proposals.

As in previous series the quality of the plans submitted varied greatly. Many learners submitted plans that were lacking in detail with the main stages not clearly identified, or broken down into subtasks. Learners struggled to identify sensible milestones or interim reviews points; some avoided them altogether whilst others included far too many, or placed them at inappropriate points.

In several instances the plans submitted generated evidence for all learning outcomes of the unit instead of the project. There is no requirement to produce a plan for the whole of this unit – the plan should be based upon the project the learner is carrying out.

LO.3 Project Execution

As in January only a small number of learners provided initial and final plans which showed that the learners had made ongoing use of their plans to mange the projects and communicate progress. This approach gives learners the opportunity to identify risks, record where adjustments have been made and show how the progress has been communicated to stakeholders.

Many learners submitted project activity logs; however they often lacked detail, did not cover the duration of the project and in many cases did not match the plans in terms of activities or dates. Learners should be encouraged to record their progress throughout the project execution and to constantly refer to the plans that they have drawn up.

This learning outcome carries a large proportion of the marks for the unit and learners should be encouraged to spend a proportional amount of time producing evidence.

LO.4 Project Review

Many learners lost marks in this learning outcome by evaluating the product and not the project; subsequently there were some detailed reviews of the multimedia products produced for Unit 6 which could not be credited at all. In other instances the reviews were more of a commentary on how they had completed their unit 6 work and once more credit could not be given.

Vague comments such as "I should have managed my time better" were once more in evidence.

Learners must be encouraged to seek feedback from others; however care must be taken in ensuring that the feedback is of the project not the product. In some instances learners did collect appropriate feedback but did not go on to make use of it; it is essential that the feedback is commented upon in the reviews and where appropriate learners should extract sensible suggestions for improvement.

Statistics

Level 2 Unit 2 - Exploring Organisations

Grade	Max. Mark	A*	A	B	C
Raw boundary mark	60	52	42	32	22
Points score	10	8	6	4	2

Level 2 Unit 3 - Effective Communication

Grade	Max. Mark	A*	A	B	C
Raw boundary mark	60	51	41	31	21
Points score	10	8	6	4	2

Level 2 Unit 4 - Skills for Innovation

Grade	Max. Mark	A*	A	B	C
Raw boundary mark	60	51	42	33	24
Points score	10	8	6	4	2

Level 2 Unit 5 - Technology Systems

Grade	Max. Mark	A*	A	B	C
Raw boundary mark	60	53	43	34	25
Points score	10	8	6	4	2

Level 2 Unit 6 - Multimedia

Grade	Max. Mark	A*	A	B	C
Raw boundary mark	60	53	43	33	24
Points score	10	8	6	4	2

Level 2 Unit 7 - Managing Projects

Grade	Max. Mark	A*	A	B	C
Raw boundary mark	60	54	43	33	23
Points score	10	8	6	4	2

Notes

Maximum Mark (Raw): the mark corresponding to the sum total of the marks shown on the mark scheme or marking grid.

Raw boundary mark: the minimum mark required by a learner to qualify for a given grade.

Please note: *Principal Learning qualifications are new qualifications, and grade boundaries for Controlled Assessment units should not be considered as stable. These grade boundaries may differ from series to series.*