Principal Moderator Feedback

January 2012

Principal Learning – Information Technology

Level 2 - Controlled Assessments

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Contents

General Comments

Each piece of work being submitted for moderation must have a Candidate Record Sheet attached. The CRS should be fully completed with centre details (name and number) candidate details (name and number), signatures (both candidate and assessor), dates and marks.

Centres must ensure that the marks entered online are the same as those recorded on the CRS.

Assessors should internally verify the work being presented for moderation and submit appropriate documentation to show this has taken place. Where marks are altered after internal verification, the centre must ensure the correct marks are entered online.

At least two multimedia products must be produced for IT206 and must be presented in electronic format (CD) and should have clearly labelled folders for each candidates work. Guidance for electronic submission can be found on the Edexcel Diploma IT webpage by following the 'Moderators' Toolkit' link.

Candidates should be encouraged to present the work by learning outcome with appropriate headings introducing it. It is useful if assessors annotate the work to show where each of the learning outcomes has been met and make a note of the page numbers on the CRS. This is very helpful to the moderation process.

Whilst centres are not expected to provide evidence for mark grid B it is suggested that some form of witness statement (personalised for each candidate) is presented so the moderator can see what was done to be awarded the marks.

Centres should include the assignment for each unit to allow the moderator to see what the candidates have been asked to do.

Unit 2 – Exploring Organisations

There continues to be a pleasing increase in high quality work in this unit.

The choice of businesses to study remains a critical criterion in determining access to the higher mark bands. Centres and candidates do best when working from examples of businesses that they have studied in person either by a visit to, or from, the organisation studied. It is also important to choose two businesses that between them cover the four Key Business processes for Learning Outcome 2/3 (LO2/3). Small local businesses can often be more successfully studied than large multinationals provided they have sufficient size to adequately illustrate the requirements for Learning Outcome 1 (LO1).

There continues, however, to be a large number of centres where this unit is tackled through internet research and where this is the case candidates frequently struggle to find sufficient detailed and relevant information to use in their reports.

There is no requirement for each candidate to study a different organisation, all candidates may study the same two organisations and make use of shared resources such as company structure diagrams, objectives statements etc. Care should be taken however to ensure that the final account is not too heavily influenced by excessive centre structure. The use of a 'centre question – candidate answer' approach, and/or writing frames will significantly restrict the candidates opportunities to gain marks in the higher mark bands.

A few instances of accounts based on work placements were seen, these can prove particularly successful but may also prove unfair to some candidates if the particular organisation where they undertake work placement is very small or lacks much evidence of IT in use.

Visits to, or from, organisations, undertaken as a group, do not constitute part of the controlled assessment time. The controlled assessment time commences with the writing up of the gathered information.

There are still some examples of where the evidence for LO1 is 'blended' with that for LO2/3, this is a difficult approach for candidates to follow and should be discouraged.

LO1 – Candidates are asked to discuss the structure, culture and roles of two organisations they have studied and to link this to the organisations objectives. It remains that this later requirement is a stumbling block for many, either by being overlooked completely or not adequately addressed. Centres may provide candidates with a suitable list of objectives from the organisation; candidates are not required to identify these. Assessment is on the way in which the candidate links these objectives to the Structure Culture and Roles of the organisation.

There has been a good improvement in balance between this LO and LO2/3 with candidates presenting shorter more focused accounts for LO1 in recognition that this LO carries only 10 of the 60 marks for this unit. Equally however there are still examples of very brief accounts that scarcely reflect the roughly 5 hours controlled assessment time that is apportioned to this LO.

It is expected that candidates will need to make use of common or shared resources to illustrate their work such as structure diagrams, staff information etc. Candidates should be encouraged to incorporate such information into their accounts but assessment will be on how this information is interpreted.

LO2 / 3

Only one organisation need be studied for each Key Business Process (KBP) of this LO. Care should be taken to ensure that between the two organisations each KBP is fully covered for both LO2 (an account of the KBP related to the organisation) and LO3 (the technology that supports the chosen KBP in that organisation). Accounts should be specific and demonstrate a reasonably even coverage of the four KBP and the technologies associated with them in the chosen organisation. For LO2 assessment each KBP should be clearly defined and the applied to the chosen organisation focusing on aspects of that organisation that demonstrate the KBP. Generally this is done well for Customer Relationship Management (CRM) and People Management (PM) but less well for Supplier Management (SM) and Service Delivery (SD). The latter two, SM and SD, are often confused and it may help candidates to think in terms of SM being everything that ‘goes into’ an organisation and SD being everything that’ goes out’. SM and SD can cover a whole range of mundane requirement such as utilities and consumables for SM and heating, lighting and security for SD, as appropriate to the organisation.

Technologies for LO3, remains a weak area, candidates should not speculate (i.e. ‘they might use sage accounting’ or ‘they could use RFID tags’) they must identify and discuss the technologies actually used by the organisation and evaluate them against the KBP.

Assessment must consider all four KBPs and the two LOs; whilst some imbalance between KBPs might be expected due to the nature of the organisations studied it may not be excessive or preclude the study of a KBP or its technology.

LO4

This continues to be a highly successful aspect of this unit with most centres correctly identifying that the key requirement is a set of recommendation for a successful business based upon playing a business simulation game. The use of more illustrations, written or actual, from playing the game would help consolidate the high marks typically awarded for this LO.

Unit 3 – Effective Communication

LO1 – 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 detailed descriptions of the three types of business media but either failed to apply the knowledge in a business context, or gave generic descriptions with limited reference to benefits and limitations and subsequently marks were limited to the lower mark bands. Where the learners had used specific business contexts they often showed good understanding of the benefits and limitations and were therefore assessed in the higher marks bands.

In the second part of this learning outcome learners must comment on their choice of business-related communications used for the team task. The majority of learners did comment on their choices but as in previous series failed to achieve the higher marks as they made no attempt to justify the reasons for their selection.

LO2 – Making yourself clear

Once again learners submitted a wide and interesting variety of communications ranging from videos and radio adverts to presentations, posters, letters and emails. Many of the communications were submitted electronically which is pleasing to see, particularly for digital media as this allows the moderator to accurately assess the candidates work.

Whilst some of the communications produced were of a good standard others were not; centres should encourage learners to produce correct and contextually appropriate communications as outlined in the WYNToC section of the Specification thereby improving the effectiveness of the communication and allowing access to 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, as in previous series where publications had been produced collaboratively, it was often difficult to identify an individual learner's contribution and this made the moderation process very difficult. Centres should encourage learners to provide evidence of their individual contribution so that they can be credited appropriately. In addition annotation or separate comments by the assessor would be of great assistance during the moderation process.

LO3 & LO4 – Set up and record keeping

As in previous series this learning outcome proved to be the weakest in this unit. Lack of detail in initial team plans continues to be an area where learners' work is weak and tracking comments are rarely detailed, often consisting of a record of 'who did what'.

It should also be noted that although it is acceptable to produce the plans collectively, it is essential that the tracking process is done on an individual basis.

Diaries must also be produced individually and this is where learners should be encouraged to provide a clear record of their individual contribution to group tasks. 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.

LO3 & LO5 – Judging performance

Whilst some learners produced reasonable evaluations a significant number concentrated on what they had done rather than commenting on communication within the group and on their own performance. In addition a significant number of candidates restricted comments to reviewing the communications produced.

However, where candidates had the correct focus the comments made were generally sensible and well considered, in both the evaluation of their own performance and that of the team; although as in previous series the impact of feedback given and received was not well considered.

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.

To be assessed in the higher mark bands in this learning outcome it is essential that comments are both detailed and evaluative.

Unit 4 – Skills for Innovation

There has been a return to some earlier issues with this unit and a clear polarisation in performance between centres. It is important that the task set should be small scale, essentially numerical and lead to at least three viable recommendations that can be presented to the client. Many candidates have struggled because the centre set task was inappropriate. Successful tasks focus on a small scale issue, such as replacing some elements of an IT installation, where there is an identified budget limit allowing candidates to work towards possible recommendations around the budget limit. These recommendations might focus on different ways of reaching the target budget or possibly on a low, medium and high cost or under/over budget set of recommendations. Consideration also needs to be given to the suitability of the data that might be gathered in producing a meaningful sophisticated spreadsheet.

LO1

There are four aspects to this LO that must all be addressed; these are clearly identified in the bulleted list in the specification's 'Guidance for allocating marks'. The candidate's initial task is to identify how they will tackle the problem before moving onto researching the problem. Both these elements must be clearly presented by the candidate in advance of tackling the spreadsheet and be supported by evidence of sources of information, research undertaken etc.

The third aspect of this LO is the spreadsheet, which should preferably be submitted electronically. The best examples model the problem permitting a whole range of 'what if' questions to be asked and suitable outcomes presented as data or charts. Sophisticated spreadsheets will make use of features such as conditional formatting, look ups, if statements, macros, linked sheets etc; to create a user friendly model.

Finally for this LO evidence of suitable findings from the investigations using the spreadsheet model should be recorded and evaluated as to their suitability for use in the presentation in LO3.

The main problem at moderation for this LO is the limited evidence submitted by candidates. Frequently the spreadsheet is the only substantial item of evidence whereas the expectation all four assessment points in this LO will be adequately presented.

LO2

There is also a strong polarisation of evidence on this LO. The best centres presenting a balance of legal and other considerations suitably applied to the problem and business under investigation. Unfortunately there are still many centres where the evidence comprises a few items of legislation, often inappropriate to the issue under investigation, and frequently little more than a 'cut and paste' from the internet. Other factors such as environmental, economic, social, health, safety, ethical, political or practical are not considered at all.

LO3

Confusion, for a few centres, has again arisen over the evidence that should be submitted here. The physical presentation i.e. the powerpoint or handout document (or increasingly both) is required here as the evidence for this LO. The actual giving of the presentation is the only aspect that falls into Mark Grid B.

The presentation can be submitted on paper, but if it is from a powerpoint presentation or similar, it must be submitted at a sufficient size to be easily legible and accompanied by speaker's notes. It is not acceptable to submit work at six slides per page for a powerpoint or screen shots for a document. Work may be submitted electronically and this is the best approach, the acceptable formats are shown on the Edexcel IT Diploma website under moderator's toolkit.

These issues aside there are some very good submissions with succinct brief slides summarising key points, supported by speaker's notes and increasingly a handout document for the client. The focus of the presentation is to present three, ideally, alternative scenarios identified and evidenced in LO1. Note that it is not possible to double credit the same evidence for LO3 and the final bullet point of the assessment in LO1. There should be two distinct sets of evidence, in LO1 it will be the conclusions drawn from the spreadsheet and in LO3 it is the arguments in favour or against the conclusions that should receive credit.

Unit 5 – Technology Systems

General

There are two parts to this unit; assembling a simple network and creating a flat-file database.

Learners assemble a network of at least three computers and one peripheral device and although it is not essential, learners will find it easier to access the higher mark bands if a scenario is supplied for the task. Although this aspect of the unit is assessed internally (LO2 using Mark grid B) it does provide the basis for tasks LO1, LO3 and LO5 which are discussed in more detail below.

The database task requires learners to create a database solution to a given set of user-requirements (scenario). Again, the selection of a suitable scenario should allow learners access to the higher mark bands.

The majority of work for IT205 was again of a good standard and assessed accurately by centres. There were improvements in the standard of evidence submitted for the networking section of the unit although fewer learners achieved higher marks for this strand of the unit than for the database strand.

Networks

It is recommended that the centre provides learners with a scenario/client for the network that they will assemble and later review. By addressing more specific client requirements, candidates will be able to address a number of the LOs in more detail i.e. LO3, Business Continuity and LO5 Network Review. Scenarios/client details do not need to be complex but simply to give the requirements of the client and some indication of the factors that LO3 Business Continuity would depend on such as the frequency at which data/files held by the client would change, the importance of files held by the client, and perhaps some indication of areas/folder structures that may be beneficial to the client's business.

LO1 Network Components

Many centres met the requirement of identifying the key network components. However, the majority of candidates 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 candidates omitted details on the **function** of these components. An example of the level of detail expected that for MB3 would be as follows "The NIC is a device that allows computers to be joined together in a local area network. Networked computers communicate with each other using a given protocol that transmits data between the different machines (nodes). It is the NIC that allows this communication to take place"

Centres should refer to the WYNTOC section of the Specification for a list of network components that should be covered.

LO3 Business Continuity

To address this LO, candidates should consider and describe key factors for a business that must be considered in respect to keeping its network running; MB2 and above specifically requires the candidate to describe measures for - **appropriate** file structures, security and backup. This does not mean that candidates cannot include **other** measures to safeguard continuity, but they **must** include explanation of the areas mentioned to achieve MB2 or higher. MB3 requires candidates to provide a detailed description of each measure which should also include guidance on how the business should approach each of these aspects. For example, a suggested AV solution, with guidance to update the definitions regularly and schedule a regular scan to occur daily at a time when the network is not in use by the business etc. The same approach applies to all key areas of safeguarding business continuity.

LO5 Network Review

In general, the quality of reviews fell into lower mark bands. Candidates are required to review the network that they have assembled and tested in LO2. 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'.

Few candidates made any reference to the original requirements of the network or any reference to audience and purpose. Often, candidates 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, it should be analysed and help in forming the suggestions for improvement for the higher MBs.

Database

LO4 Database Structure, Automation, Data Retrieval

As in previous series, candidates addressed this LO well, with many achieving high marks with the majority of database evidence submitted electronically with appropriate supporting paper-based evidence.

To access to the higher mark bands the database produced must clearly demonstrates a good sense of audience and purpose. This will be evidenced through: a database structure which uses datatypes and validation appropriate to the scenario, a data entry form which is clearly takes into account the end-user, and finally, reports that are of a high standard with no duplication or redundancy of data, meaningful titles and are fit for purpose.

It is recommended that candidates include a brief introduction stating the client requirements for the database system i.e. what/who the database is for, the intended audience etc. By providing this information, candidates would clearly be able to evidence that they have produced and **effective** database which provides a structure, forms, reports, macros etc which show a **good sense** of their audience.

Once the candidate 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 candidates should be made fully aware of this.

It is **not** a requirement for candidates to show **how** they have created and setup their database, but it would be expected that they explain **why** specific fields with sensible datatypes and field properties are 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.

LO5 Review of the Database

As with the Network Review, writing an evaluative review is a weak area for many candidates. Reviews were generally descriptive with little or no reference back to their initial aims and audience.
For higher marks, in addition to evaluative comments, candidates 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 a find record button because this would…..' would be judged sensible.

Unit 6 - Multimedia

General

There are two strands 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.

Firstly, candidates should explain how and why multimedia is used, followed by a specific review of two or three multimedia products which each have a different use. It should be noted that the specification states 'different uses' and therefore when selecting products to review it is essential that they do have different purposes. Two websites which advertise products **are not** different uses; however, two websites, one to advertise and another to buy goods online do demonstrate different uses. Please refer to the specification for details on the various 'uses' of multimedia which candidates could consider.

The second strand is 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.

Please note that candidates must produce **at least two products** as per the specification; this does not require two distinct products; for example, it could be a short video (including text, sound and images) embedded within a webpage – they key requirement is that **both** products are in fact multimedia. In order for the work to be assessed fully, digital the multimedia products must be submitted electronically for moderation.

LO1 Uses of multimedia

Many reviews gave only brief consideration to the design features used and focused on reviewing the products. The 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.

Marks were often lost through simple reviews the products with mention of only basic features such as the colours and layout of a website instead of reviewing the multimedia features such as sound, navigation, use of images/text/video etc

LO2 Design, Development and Testing

Candidates should be aware that this is a high scoring LO and carries 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.

MB3 requires 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 candidates produced only annotated sketches and whereas a timeline or structure diagram would often improve and add to the detail in the designs considerably.

Design sketches should have detailed annotation specifying font face, font size, colour, image details (description of or filename) and other relevant information. The design evidence that a candidate must provide will vary depending upon the products being developed. The key factor is that whatever design information is given, it should allow third party implementation in order to achieve the top mark band.

Evidence of testing is not specifically required but it is implicit that for higher mark bands, testing must have taken place to ensure that the products meet all of the specified requirements. Testing should be based on initial product objectives and intended audience.

LO3 Evaluation

The evaluation of the products should consider feedback from reviewers. MB3 requires that feedback will be specific and based upon targeted questions assessing suitability for audience and purpose. Feedback should then be analysed and commented upon. High scoring evaluations should be give a realistic assessment of the final products, and should include at least 1 justified and sensible suggestion for improvement.

Unit 7 - Managing Projects

LO1 – 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. There was pleasing evidence to show that centres had taken on board previous comments and the vast majority of IT projects chosen were appropriate.

As in previous series 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. Learners should be encouraged to identify the stated objectives and outcomes of the projects; this will allow them to more readily identify factors that lead to a 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.

In many cases learners produced a useful set of hints and tips drawn from their research into the two projects; however, there was still a significant number who produced generic suggestions. Learners should also be encouraged to comment on how adherence to their hints and tips can determine a project's success or failure.

LO2 – 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. As in previous series many learners successfully used their Unit 6 work as the project to be managed. 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 centres appeared to have heeded earlier advice and encouraged learners to use the headings provided in the 'What you need to cover' section of the Specification as the basis for their proposals; consequently learners were able to access marks in the higher mark bands.

Plans continue to pose a problem within some centres. Learners often submitted plans that were lacking in detail with the main stages not clearly identified, or with tasks not broken down into subtasks. Learners continue to struggle to identify sensible milestones or interim reviews points; some avoided them altogether whilst others included far too many, or placed them at inappropriate points.

Where learners had produced Gantt charts for their project they generally did include milestones and review points, and there was evidence that these had indeed been planned. Unfortunately the Gantt charts were either printed across a number of pages making them difficult to follow, or too small to read; electronic submission of the charts would aid moderation considerably.

LO3 – Project Execution

Learners are, in general, getting better at submitting both initial and final plans showing ongoing use to manage the projects and communicate progress. Providing two (or more) plans as the project develops is a simple and effective method of showing problems that arise and consequential changes to the plans.

Evidence for this outcome also included a variety of project logs and diaries; however, as in previous series, 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.

In many cases where learners had added comments to the initial plans, showing where problems had arisen they failed to make any subsequent adjustments to their plan. Learners should be encouraged to simultaneously record their progress, refer back to their plans and make adjustments as necessary. Similarly where reviews have taken place plans should be updated accordingly.

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.

LO4 – Project Review

Learners continue to lose marks in this 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. Whilst it is expected that learners will need to refer to the product the emphasis must be on their management of the project i.e. the extent to which objectives have been met, factors that contributed to the success /failure and lessons learned.

As in previous series many learners failed to seek feedback from others and where it had been elicited it generally focussed on the product and not the project. Where appropriate feedback had been collected the learners often failed to make use of it, merely included the feedback questionnaires with their work. It is essential that the feedback is commented upon in the reviews and where appropriate learners should extract sensible suggestions for improvement.

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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