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Principal Moderator's Feedback

Summer 2012

Principal Learning – Information Technology
Level 2 - Controlled Assessments

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Summer 2012
Publications Code DP032544

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

This year we saw slightly disappointing performance on this unit. With some centres submitting work for the first time, this led, in some instances, to a return to some of the problems encountered in the earlier sessions of this qualification.

Many centres had made a poor choice of organisations to study for LO1 and there had been return to LO1 work being mixed in with LO2/3 work. Internet research was frequently seen, and, as has been commented upon before, does not usually provide sufficient depth and detail for the assessment. The best work was seen where centres had ether visited local organisations or had made use of a visiting speaker. Small scale is clearly the best option with studies of local shops and businesses proving far more successful than attempts to study major corporations. As in previous years candidates did not always round of their report on LO1 with reference to the organisations objectives.

LO2/3 has sadly moved backwards in performance and was generally an area where centres were far too generous with marks; this was in part due to candidates studying both LO1 organisations when only one is required. As a consequence two organisations were being studied in general rather than one organisation in depth.

There was also a problem of uneven coverage of all four Key Business Processes and very superficial or generic descriptions of the technology to support them.

There was some excellent work, suitably focused and detailed that has proved an encouragement and this work covered the full range of marks available.
LO4 was done well by most candidates with good recommendations for business success supported by evidence from playing the simulation game. There was still however a few centres were the candidates wrote about playing the simulation game only.

Success in this unit clearly depends on the choice of organisation for LO1,2 and 3, and consideration needs to be given in advance as to whether it will generate sufficient and appropriate evidence for each LO. Sometimes candidates are struggling to either make sense of an over complex organisation or one where suitable technology is not present.

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.

As in previous series 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 describing what a business could do, rather than providing specific examples. There was also limited reference to benefits and limitations of the types of communications.

Where the learners had used specific business contexts they often showed good understanding of the benefits and limitations and were therefore able to achieve marks in the higher marks bands.

The majority of learners produced evidence in standard report format, but many others produced effective presentations. Learners must however ensure that when their chosen method is a slide show that the information is legible when printed.

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. In several instances learners identified the communications they intended to produce, but failed to follow this through and produced entirely different communications.

LO2 – Making yourself clear

Once again learners submitted a wide and interesting variety of communications and it was encouraging to see examples of media produced by learners who had obviously explored the possibilities presented by their research in LO.1, i.e. multimedia and web based presentations. Many of the communications were submitted electronically and this allowed the moderator to accurately assess the 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.

It is clear from much of the evidence submitted 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, an ongoing issue arises where publications have been produced collaboratively, and there is little to identify an individual learner's contribution; this makes the moderation process very difficult. Centres must 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

The performance in this Learning Outcome was very mixed. There was some really good practice demonstrated with detailed minutes of meetings that recorded discussions and decisions making and coherent team plans that provided detailed evidence of tasks and sub-tasks. However, in other instances a poor attempt was made by learners with only minimal records of set-up and record keeping.

Where learners have clearly established roles, responsibilities and objectives at the start of the project they are better prepared to produce detailed plans which can subsequently be used for tracking and monitoring purposes. 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

In general learners are getting better at providing reviews, although there are some areas which continue to cause concern.

A significant number of learners continue to concentrate on what they had done, restricting comments to a review of the communications produced rather than looking at their own performance and that of the team.

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; 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

This year we saw slightly disappointing performance on this unit. With some centres submitting work for the first time, this led, in some instances, to a return to some of the problems encountered in the earlier sessions of this qualification.

Centres have been encouraged to submit the spreadsheet and presentation in digital format so it was disappointing to see a return to mostly paper based submissions.

There has also been quite a few centres misunderstanding the purpose of this assessment which is to present a series of solutions to a business problems or challenge. In many instances candidates, rather than putting forward a range of options to choose from, have instead made a choice themselves thereby reducing the significance of the presentation, at which the ‘client’ (person setting the challenge or presenting the opportunity) would make their choice. It was also notable that some candidates addressed their presentation to their class or teacher rather than their ‘client’.

A great deal of the work seen had made use of the edexcel assessment exemplar; where other choices of challenge or opportunity had been made these were often good and appropriate. A small number of centres tried to combine this with a business enterprise task which, as has been mentioned in the past, is not appropriate for this assessment.

LO1

This has greatly improved in balance with many more candidates correctly covering all four bullet points of the assessment. It still remains the case that candidates solely rely on internet research when interviews with the client, potential customers/users, technical experts and local retail options are frequently appropriate and desirable. Spreadsheets varied from highly sophisticated tools with excellent design features and flexibility to being little more than an adding device to total costs. It was unfortunate that in a few instances having produced a superb spreadsheet candidates did not then use it to work out possible options, instead concluding the work at this point and assuming the client would then use the spreadsheet to identify options.

Concerns must be expressed at the similarity of spreadsheet design seen within some centres, suggesting the use of centre designed templates. Centres are reminded that where this is seen it may be regarded as guidance, which must be reflected in the marks given by centre assessors. Similarly some presentations seem to follow both a centre designed template and prescribed slide order and again this may be regarded as guidance.

LO2

There still remains a predominance of work on legal issues to the exclusion of other considerations as listed in the specification. Frequently candidates simply download information on a variety of legal issues and present this as their evidence for this strand. What is required here is a thoughtful and balanced consideration of how legal and other issues will impact upon the choices they are recommending.

LO3

This has improved greatly with many candidates submitting both a power point presentation and documentation with supporting data and information. Speakers notes are much more commonly seen now and on the whole presentation have become more appropriate and focused on conveying just the key points. There still remains however some where the presentation slides are far too dense in content to be suitable for the task.

Overall there is much to be positive about in this year's submissions, with some excellent work covering the full mark range.

Unit 5 – Technology Systems

There are two distinct tasks within this unit; assembling and evaluating a simple network, and creating and manipulating a flat-file database, both of which should be fit for purpose in terms of their ‘client’s’ requirements .

In summary, the unit requires learners to produce a portfolio that evidences that they:

- understand the key components of a networked PC system
- can assemble and troubleshoot a simple network
- understand the principles of system availability
- can design, develop, test and troubleshoot a simple database system for an identified user need
- can review and assess fitness for purpose of both their network and database systems

Although it is not essential for the network task, learners will find it easier to access the higher mark bands if the centre provides a scenario is supplied for the task.

Learners must assemble a network of at least 3 computers and one peripheral device and. 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 majority of work for IT205 was again of a good standard and assessed accurately by centres.

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 LO’s 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

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 “NICs provide computers with a connection to the network and handle data-conversion. Within the PC, data travels in parallel but the network medium requires serial transmission. It is the transceiver (transmitter and receiver) on the NIC that converts data from parallel to serial and vice versa”.

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 candidates to produce a guide for others (the client) that explains the function of key network components. Centres should refer to the WYNTOC section of the Specification for a list of components.

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.

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

LO5 Network Review

The key aspect for this LO is that the candidate is 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’.

Network reviews were again generally weak, with few candidates making any reference to the original aims in terms of 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 mark bands.

Database

LO4 Database Structure, Automation, Data Retrieval

Again the majority of candidates addressed this LO well, with many achieving high marks.

The inclusion of a copy of the database in an electronic format is of great use in supporting the paper-based portfolio evidence.

To ensure that candidates have 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.

Many candidates did include a brief introduction stating what/who the database is for, the intended audience and the key requirements for the system which allowed them to clearly evidence that they have produced and **effective** database which provides a structure, forms, reports, macros etc which show a **good sense** of their audience.

Please note that mail merge is not considered an automated feature; suitable features would be the use of macros to carry out tasks that are **useful** to the ‘client’.

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

Candidates must firstly to consider and evaluate the uses of multimedia in business and then, design and create **at least two** multimedia products.

For part one, 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 part of the unit, requires the candidate 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.

LO1 Uses of multimedia

In many cases reviews of products gave only brief consideration to the design features used, with the candidate's focus incorrectly 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 candidates 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.

LO2 Design, Development and Testing

This is a high scoring LO and candidates 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.

Although weak designs continued to restrict the marks that could be awarded, many products were of a much better standard than in previous series. 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 third 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.

For the higher MBs, 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 candidate 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 third 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. Without this evidence moderation cannot take place.

Although evidence of testing is not specifically required, it is implicit in the assessment criteria, 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 candidates 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.

LO3 Evaluation

For all MBs 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, candidates should be analysing the feedback received and making comments based upon their findings. High scoring evaluations should be give a realistic assessment of the final products, and should include at least one 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. Unfortunately there continue to be issues with the projects selected.

Many learners have been directed towards acceptable IT projects, such as the opening of Heathrow Terminal and the introduction of Oyster, unfortunately there is an increasing trend to ignore the IT focus of projects.

Another change has been a move towards learners studying IT businesses or IT products rather than IT projects; Ebay, Gumtree, Apple, iPad and WAP were amongst some of the work submitted in this series.

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; once more very few centres indicated the level of support given.

It was pleasing to see a continued improvement in the quality of the Project Proposals submitted with centres clearly encouraging learners to use the headings provided in the 'What you need to cover' section of the Specification as the basis for their proposals; consequently many 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 some attempt of use of plans to track and communicate progress; however there is still little evidence of the use of plans to manage the projects. 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.

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.

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.

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

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Order Code DP032544 Summer 2012

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