

Principal Moderator Feedback

Summer 2013

Principal Learning in Information Technology (ZIT20)

- IT202 – Exploring Organisations
- IT203 – Effective Communication
- IT204 – Skills for Innovation
- IT205 – Technology Systems
- IT206 – Multimedia
- IT207 – Managing Projects

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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.

IT202 – Exploring Organisations

As was the case last year there seemed to be a significant percentage of centres with problems in interpreting the specification and the assessment. Almost all the issues that arose had been covered in previous examiners reports. There was however some excellent work from well established centres with the full mark range covered.

A continuing problem with LO1 and LO2/3 was choosing inappropriate businesses. Where centres allow candidates a free choice of businesses to study there must be some process of checking the chosen organisation before the work is undertaken to ensure that the organisation will offer both the breadth and depth required to cover the four key business processes in LO2/3. Several unsuitable organisations were chosen that left candidates floundering for suitable exemplar material in LO2/3.

In LO1 there was, where suitable example were chosen, a great improvement in performance with most candidates looking evenly at structure culture and roles and relating these well to the objectives of the organisation.

LO2/3 is improving in some respects. Centres seem now far more aware of the need for even coverage of all four Key Business processes and most work attempted balanced coverage where possible. It is in the LO3 element that problems remain and candidates fail to get the depth and detail of technology required for higher marks. It is vital that candidates have good access to information about the organisation. It is important to recognise that internet research alone is rarely sufficient for the detail required. LO4 was again done well by most candidates with good recommendations for business success supported by evidence from playing the simulation game.

Overall, an improvement on previous years for much of the work but problems still remains with the exemplar technology for LO3.

IT203 – 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 of what a business could do, rather than providing specific examples. There was however an improvement in descriptions of the 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.

Learners chose a variety of methods of presenting evidence; many continue to use standard report format, but others produced effective presentations. Learners must ensure, when their chosen method is a printed presentation, 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 WYNTToC 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 on-going 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 and logs 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.

IT204 – Skills for innovation

A significant and pleasing shift in emphasis was seen this year, with many learners paying more attention to all the requirements of LO1 rather than focusing on the spreadsheet alone. The work for LO2 was also greatly improved with most candidates providing more balanced coverage. In LO3 there has been a significant increase in support documents for the presentation. All in all there has been a dramatic improvement in the approach to this unit although certain issues persist as for previous years.

It is important to note that this unit is not a team work unit for assessment purposes. There are occasional incidences of 'carry over' from unit 3 (the team work unit). It is important that where a team work approach is used, all evidence submitted for unit 4 is individually ascribed to a particular candidate.

Generally, most centres are now using the 'Vicky's Vinyls' scenarios from Edexcel and as such few problems are encountered. Problems arise where centres do not approach this as a 'client focused' challenge with the objective of presenting three or so potential costed solutions for their client to choose from.

The business enterprise approach appeared in a few cases and as stated before this approach is not appropriate for this unit.

LO1 is now tackled well with a good balance on all the four assessment areas. The spreadsheet element has become a little neglected in some cases. There are still too many examples of 'adding up' spreadsheets when a flexible spreadsheet allowing for 'what if' solutions is needed. There were some good examples of spreadsheets making use of suitable functions and features but others where features were added to no apparent benefit to the user.

The final section of LO1, identifying solutions is still mistakenly placed in LO3 by some candidates. The three or so potential options need to be identified first in LO1 before proceeding to prepare the presentation for LO3. LO2 is transformed with the message about 'other issues' getting home at last and with a much better approach to applying the legal issues to the business. There was some very good work seen in this unit.

LO3 As last year this has improved greatly with many candidates submitting both a powerpoint 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, as was the case last year, there is much to be positive about in this year's submission, with some excellent work covering the full mark range.

IT205 - Technology Systems

As in previous years, the majority of work for IT205 was of a good standard and predominately assessed accurately by centres.

The requirements of the unit are that the learner should assemble and evaluate a simple network, and create a flat-file database, both of which should be fit for purpose.

Learners should produce a portfolio which 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

Students are able to access higher mark bands more easily where the centre provides a scenario for both tasks; this makes it clearer in terms of addressing the client requirements and to effectively evaluate both solutions.

A simple network of at least 3 computers and one peripheral device must be assembled by students. This area of the unit is assessed internally by centres (LO2 using Mark grid B) but it does provide the basis for tasks LO1, LO3 and LO5 which are discussed in more detail below.

Networks

As mentioned previously, 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 client requirements and some underlying 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

Without a *good* explanation of the function of key network components it is not possible to achieve marks above MB2. In general, marks were lost when 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”

Most centres correctly identified *key* network components as detailed in the specification. Centres should refer to the WYNTOC section of the Specification for a list of components.

LO3 Business Continuity

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 general, where candidates missed out on the higher mark band it was because they failed to give suggestions of how a business could implement each specific measure.

LO5 Network Review

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’. Network reviews were 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.

Where feedback is sought, it should be **analysed** and provide a basis for the suggested improvements required for the higher MBs.

Database

LO4 Database Structure, Automation, Data Retrieval

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

Many centres submitted both electronic and paper-based evidence for the database which is of great help in supporting the moderation and agreeing the centre marks awarded.

In general, higher marks are accessed through the creation of a database which shows a good sense of audience and purpose. Again, as with the network task, if a simple 'client scenario' is included it is much simpler for students to clearly evidence this aspect. Higher marks can be achieved through evidence of: 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.

As previously mentioned, where candidates included a brief introduction stating what/who the database is for, the intended audience and the key requirements for the system; they were able to clearly evidence that they have produced an **effective** database which provides a structure, forms, reports, macros etc which show a **good sense** of their audience.

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' and typically not easily accessible through the Microsoft Access menu.

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

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' are not sensible suggestions 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.

IT206 - Multimedia

Candidates must consider and evaluate the uses of multimedia in business and design and create **at least 2** multimedia products.

For the first aspect of this unit, students should explain how and why multimedia is used, followed by a specific review of 2 or 3 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. 2 websites which advertise products **are not** different uses; however, 2 websites, 1 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 2 multimedia products. It is important to recognise that the **design** detail is equally as important as the subsequent **development** and **testing** of the products.

Candidates must produce **at least 2 products** as per the specification; this does not require 2 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.

LO1 Uses of multimedia

In general product reviews gave only brief consideration to the design features used, with the focus incorrectly on the design features of websites. 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.

Review marks were often lost through consideration of only '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 2 multimedia products** to be designed and created. Often weak designs continued to restrict the marks that could be awarded, but many products were of a high standard.

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 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 3rd party implementation in order to achieve the top mark band.

Moderation cannot take place without **electronic evidence** the multimedia products is included with the sample. Guidance for electronic submission can be found on the Edexcel Diploma IT webpage by following the 'Moderators' Toolkit' link.

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. Candidates should be encouraged 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 2 products should consider feedback from reviewers. To achieve MB3 comments gathered from reviewers must be specific and based upon targeted questions that assess the degree to which the products are suitable for their intended audience and purpose. Candidates analyse feedback and make sensible comments based upon their findings. 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.

IT207 – 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 continue to be 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 many of the projects studied.

Another change has been a move towards learners studying IT businesses or IT products rather than IT projects; iPhone, 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

The general quality of the 'hints and tips' produced has, series on series, improved greatly. Many learners produce useful 'hints and tips' drawn from their research into the two projects; however, there are still a significant number who produce generic suggestions. In order to access the highest marks learners should 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.

Many learners submitted Gantt charts for their projects, including appropriate milestones and review points, and there was evidence that these had been well planned. Unfortunately many 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. 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. Learners should be encouraged to simultaneously record their progress, refer back to their plans and make necessary adjustments. 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

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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