

Examiners' Report June 2009

Principal Learning

Information Technology Levels 1 & 2

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Principal Learning Information Technology

Level 1 Introduction

This is the first moderation series where all units for the Levels 1 & 2 Principal Learning in IT have been offered for moderation and awarded. This moderation series follows a limited offering in January 2009 where Unit 1 was available for external assessment and Unit 5 was offered for moderation. Despite the small number of centres that submitted work this session, a high standard of work was demonstrated amongst many candidates.

Some centres did not attach the Candidate Record Sheets (CRS) which moderators use to dissect assessor marks. The CRS is a core requirement when submitting work for moderation. The CRS should be fully completed with signatures, dates and assessor marks. There should be a statement to indicate the level of guidance provided.

Learners should be encouraged to present the work by Learning Outcome with appropriate headings introducing it. Some assessors annotated the work to show where each of the Learning Outcomes had been met and made a note of the page numbers on the CRS. This is very helpful and assists in the moderation process.

Whilst centres are not expected to provide evidence for Marking Grid B it is suggested that some form of witness statement (personalised for each learner) is presented.

Level 1 Unit 1 Technology in Organisations

General comments

Following on from a very successful January series it was very pleasing to see the high standards which had been set were maintained by the learners, with once again the vast majority gaining over 50% of the marks.

Unfortunately, there were still some learners who were unable to gain marks because they had not attempted all of the questions, whilst others selected more than one response for one mark answers.

Learners should be made aware that they are not penalised for incorrect answers, therefore an attempt should be made to answer all questions, and that the number of marks given is indicative of the number of responses that are required.

The specification clearly states in 'about this unit' that learners '...will investigate some of the technology systems used in business' and '...will learn about the key components of technology systems including hardware, software, communication and networks'. Learners need to know not just what the components are but how they work together to create the technology system.

Question 1

This was by far the weakest on the paper, with some candidates achieving very low marks. A surprising number of learners were unable to identify whether standard devices were used for input, output or both. The devices are listed as input and output in the specification and centres should be aware of this when delivering content.

Technology systems used in retailing are a significant part of the specification content and centres would be well advised to ensure that candidates are given access to both theoretical information and practical activities whenever possible. Please refer to the 'guidance for teaching this unit' in the specification.

Question 2

Candidates scored well on this question with the majority achieving over half the marks and a significant number achieving most of the marks. Given that this topic is likely to be outside of many of the learners' day-to-day experience, the results were very pleasing.

Question 3

There was a very good response to this question, the majority gaining most of the marks; they were able to show a clear understanding of components needed to use the internet and of the processes involved in buying goods online.

Question 4

Candidates scored well on this question with the majority achieving over half marks and a significant number achieving full marks. The candidates showed that they had a good understanding of the benefits to organisations of implementing and improving technology systems.

Question 5

Another high scoring question with only a small number failing to score more than half marks. Candidates were able to show an understanding of benefits to both the banks and individuals of using ATMs.

Level 1 Unit 2 The Impact of Technology

Learning Outcome 1

Learners were required to provide a description of the technology used in two organisations including reasons for its use. In addition to this, for marks in the top Mark Band, they needed to provide notes on how the technology benefits the organisation such as improved efficiency, increased profits, improved communication and the ability to access new markets.

Most learners looked at two organisations but some tended to spend more time describing the organisations themselves rather than the technologies used. Learners should mention the organisation but should concentrate on the descriptions of the technologies such as administration, control and monitoring, education and training, mobile working, marketing, sales and security.

Learning Outcome 2

Learners were required to provide examples of how individuals use technology to live, work, learn and socialise, with comments on how it affects them. They should have also given an example of the impact of technology on society.

There was opportunity here for learners to make the most of their own experiences of their uses of technology which would have allowed them to provide more information on how it affects them. Most learners covered the impact of technology on society with reference to the digital divide and virtual communities.

Some centres provided tables with headings for learners to complete but in some instances these did not allow for much detail to be included and restricted learners in the marks they could be awarded.

Level 1 Unit 3 Working with People

Learning Outcome 1

Learners were required to provide comments about the three main types of communication media in business contexts and their use. The types of communication media that should have been covered were digital, print and spoken. Most learners covered each of the three types of communication media but few mentioned their use. Learners should have included comments on the uses of the different media types such as informing customers, getting the message across, attracting attention, entertainment, education and persuasion.

There was also a requirement for learners to comment on the choice of publications for the team task. It is recommended that learners include comments on why the decision was made to choose the final publications presented. If there was a list of initial ideas, there should be comments to say why the final publications were chosen from the list and why others were rejected. The comments should focus on the choice of publication rather than the publication itself.

Learning Outcomes 2, 3 and 4

Learners were required to produce a team plan with comments made throughout the project on team discussions and decisions made. The team should have produced some business related business communications that presented both textual and numerical information and each learner should have made some contribution to the team effort to communicate a message.

Some basic team plans were submitted by most learners as a starting point but there was limited use of the plans during the project. In some instances the plans were included as a 'task' and then ignored. Regardless of the complexity of the project there should be a suitable plan - a list of tasks with a start and end date for each and an estimated time for each of the tasks should be included as a minimum requirement. Learners then need to update the plan as they are working on the tasks to show whether the dates/times were adhered to or whether there were changes. There could be a column added to allow for comments on team discussions and decisions made. Comments could include a record of meetings to discuss a task - what did each team member say, what was discussed and what was decided. In some instances it was difficult to see how the team worked together and who was in each team.

To be awarded marks in Mark Band 3, learners also needed to comment on initial meetings where objectives were agreed and roles allocated. These could be included on the comments section - what did the team agree to do, list of tasks, why they came to the decision and who was going to do what. Very few learners provided work to be awarded marks in this Band.

All learners produced the business related communications they were required to produce and most included both textual and numerical information, some more successfully than others.

Learning Outcomes 3 and 5

Learners were required to make comments on the performance of the team including the effect of behaviour or actions on communication. They should have also provided comments on their own performance and contribution to teamwork which demonstrated self awareness.

Most learners made some comments on the team's performance but few made any reference to the effects of behaviour or self-awareness. Learners are not expected to complete a diary or a log but they could be encouraged to keep notes throughout the project to remind them of what happened during the project and how they performed so this would help them when completing this section of the work.

Level 1 Unit 4 Network Systems

Learning Outcome 1

Learners were required to identify the components and provide a description of their function. All learners made some attempt at providing comments on the various components and some provided connectivity diagrams to show the layout but in some instances it appeared that learners had used comments that were either downloaded directly from the internet or copied from a handout.

Level 1 Unit 5 Database Systems

Learning Outcome 1

Learners were required to create a simple database structure, create a data entry form, and enter, edit and delete records. Most learners did well on this section and provided evidence, in the form of screenshots to cover all of the requirements. However, centres should encourage learners to print the initial list of records before any amending has taken place so that the Moderators can see what amendments have taken place. One area of concern for this Learning Outcome was the amount of text learners were being asked to enter at this level. To be awarded marks in the higher Mark Bands, entering records etc had to be done accurately. The more they have to key in the more chance there is of errors. Most learners produced data entry forms that had been customised and were well presented.

Learning Outcome 2

Learners were required to retrieve some information from the database and present the results clearly. Most learners performed queries and presented the results of these queries in the form of reports that were well presented with appropriate titles. It is, however, recommended that learners show the design view of the queries as well as the results so the Moderators can see what criteria were used.

Level 1 Unit 6 Multimedia

General comments

Centres are advised to submit the multimedia products in electronic format on CD.

Learning Outcome 1

Learners were required to make comments about two different uses of multimedia in business such as (1) promotion and advertising (2) education and training or (3) entertainment and leisure. This was covered well by most learners although there was a varying degree of detail provided. However, some learners only covered one use and this tended to be promotion and advertising.

Learning Outcome 2

Learners were required to provide up-front designs and develop two multimedia products from the designs that met the specified requirements. Designs, in the main, were very basic. They should be detailed enough to allow the product to be developed by someone else if necessary. The submitted designs should have been developed into the final products so that the requirements could have been matched but in some instances the designs and the final products were not that similar.

The final products were presented appropriately with most centres submitting the work on CD. Most learners produced presentations and videos which were, in some instances, well presented but some learners had produced very poor quality evidence and it was difficult for the Moderators to see what the products were promoting.

Learning Outcome 1

Learners were required to make comments about the products with feedback from reviewers and to provide suggestions for improvement. Reviewer feedback was quite good but where learners provided questions with answer boxes there were limited comments with most reviewers responding with yes/no answers. Suggestions for improvement were provided with some more sensible than others. In some instances learners thought their work was so good they couldn't improve it in any way - with sensible reviewers making sensible comments there is usually room for some improvement even to the most professional product.

Learners are encouraged to make comments on each of their products with 'why' they produced them in the way they did - why did they decide to have the text appearing one word at a time with sound, why did they choose the images, why did they use music on the video as background etc?

Statistics

Level 1 Unit 1 Technology in Organisations

	Max. Mark	A*	A	B
Raw boundary mark	45	39	29	19
Points Score	4	3	2	1

Level 1 Unit 2 The Impact of Technology

	Max. Mark	A*	A	B
Raw boundary mark	30	25	18	11
Points Score	4	3	2	1

Level 1 Unit 3 Working with People

	Max. Mark	A*	A	B
Raw boundary mark	60	50	34	19
Points Score	8	6	4	2

Level 1 Unit 4 Network Systems

	Max. Mark	A*	A	B
Raw boundary mark	30	26	19	13
Points Score	4	3	2	1

Level 1 Unit 5 Database Systems

	Max. Mark	A*	A	B
Raw boundary mark	30	25	18	12
Points Score	4	3	2	1

Level 1 Unit 6 Multimedia

	Max. Mark	A*	A	B
Raw boundary mark	60	52	37	22
Points Score	8	6	4	2

Notes

Centres are reminded that this is the first summer examination for this new specification and that boundaries may change in the following series

Maximum Mark (raw): the mark corresponding to the sum total of the marks shown on the Mark Scheme or Marking Grids.

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

Principal Learning Information Technology

Level 2 Introduction

This was the first series in which centres were able to submit work across all of the units for Level 2 and the overall results were generally pleasing.

The externally examined unit was once again successfully completed by the vast majority of the candidates entered.

Centres were required to send samples of work for all units to a nominated moderator. The majority of centres submitted the work well within the deadlines set and included the appropriate documentation, correctly completed.

The centres were required to send as a sample for each unit; the work of the candidates identified by Edexcel, and where these are not included in the initially selected samples, the work of the candidates with the highest and lowest marks. Several centres failed to include the extra work and this delayed the moderation process.

The majority of centres followed the Edexcel sample assignments, with some minor modifications to suit local situations. A small number successfully produced their own materials, however it is important to stress that where centres take this approach they should ensure that the materials allow candidates to achieve all Learning Outcomes at the appropriate level. Where centres use their own assessment materials they should submit one copy with the sample of work.

The quality of assessment by centres varied across the units. There were many centres where the assessment of work was accurate and marks awarded were well within acceptable national standards. Unfortunately there were others where the assessment was wildly optimistic and centres are advised to look closely at the 'guidance for allocating marks' section within each unit when assessing work.

It is incumbent on centres to carry out internal standardisation; there was clear evidence of this produced by most centres, but unfortunately not by all. Where internal standardisation had not taken place the marks awarded by the centre were frequently at variance to those awarded during moderation.

Centres are encouraged to consider more interesting approaches when producing the evidence for the units; in particular they should consider methods that can be used to submit ePortfolios, the candidates are after all following an applied learning qualification and the production of evidence should embody this.

Level 2 Unit 1 The Potential of Technology

General comments

As with Level 1 Unit 1, it was very pleasing to see the high standards set in January being carried forward to this series by learners; the vast majority once more gaining over 50% of the marks.

It should be stressed to learners that they should attempt all parts of the questions but not select more than one response for one mark answers.

In the 'about this unit' section of the specification, it is clearly stated that learners '...will find out about components of technology systems - what they do and how they work'. Learners need to know what the individual components are and how they work together to create the technology system. It is also important that centres take heed of the advice given in the 'guidance for teaching this unit' section of the specification in order to ensure that learners get both theoretical and practical opportunities to develop their understanding.

Question 1

This was generally well answered with the vast majority gaining more than half the marks. However, some learners failed to show any real understanding of the technology systems used in retailing, the benefits that they bring, or how the data collected can be used.

Question 2

It was pleasing to see that all learners were able to achieve 4 or more marks and that they had a sound understanding of both wired and wireless networking.

Question 3

This question was well answered by many, with the vast majority gaining in excess of half the marks. This was particularly pleasing as these topics are likely to be outside of many learners' day-to-day experiences.

Question 4

There was a very good response to this question, the majority scoring high marks. Learners were able to show a clear understanding of components needed to use the internet and of the processes involved in buying goods online.

Question 5

This question gave learners the opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge of technology systems within a sport and leisure context. Learners showed a good understanding of the key components and why an organisation should implement improved technology systems.

Question 6

This was one of the more difficult questions on the paper and this was reflected in the marks. However, there were still many learners who achieved high marks, showing that they had developed a good depth of understanding of the wider issues relating to the technology systems used within the banking sector.

Questions 7 and 8

These two short questions were well answered by many learners. Most were able to demonstrate an understanding of the impact of new technologies on individuals, organisations and society.

Level 2 Unit 2 Exploring Organisations

General comments

This was the second occasion when work could be submitted for this unit. There was a significant increase in entries and a greater variety of work was seen with many different approaches to the assessments tasks.

Most centres have either followed the Edexcel assessment materials or used them with minor modifications. In the few cases where a centre had developed their own assessment task, success was mixed, with one notable imaginative approach, but also some which did not allow the learners to produce the required evidence.

On this occasion all submissions were paper-based with most following a narrative report style, although in a couple of instances centres had encouraged learners to be more imaginative in the evidence they presented for Learning Outcome 4, making good use of the suggested 'Dummies Guide' approach from the Edexcel assessment task. Overall, however, most work was a continuous narrative, with limited illustration and exemplification. Centres are encouraged to consider more interesting approaches to presenting the evidence and especially to consider how the work might be submitted in a digital format through an ePortfolio.

The quality of assessment by centres varied with many making a sound and valid assessment of the work but a few having a highly optimistic interpretation of the marking standard. In some cases centres appear not to have used the guidance for allocating marks and awarded marks inappropriately, especially in Learning Outcomes 2 and 3, where clarification of how marks may be distributed between key business processes and the supporting technology is given.

Exemplar organisations may be chosen from any area of activity and do not need to be specifically IT-related organisations. Evidently a 'first port of call' should be the partner organisations with the consortia but, if they prove inappropriate, other organisations should first be sought out from the local area. The use of distant, geographically-speaking, national organisations looks, based on work seen so far, to be an unsuitable choice. A local branch of a national organisation may well be suitable, however.

Whilst not excluding schools and colleges from potential study, they should be regarded as a choice of last resort. Frequently learners are unable to perceive their school or college as a commercial organisation and, as a choice of study, they do little to expand the learners' horizons and understanding of commercial organisations. If the school or college is to be studied it is recommended that a commercial sub-unit of the school or college be chosen, such as the catering organisation.

Most work seen was reasonable in approach and presentation. The better work seen was where learners had been directed in their choice of organisations (rather than being left to choose themselves) and where learners had been advised to allocate their time in relation to the marks to be awarded.

Learning Outcome 1

This strand carried 10 of the 60 marks for the unit and thus should represent about 3 to 4 hours work. It was evident however that many learners had spent much longer than this, usually to the detriment of performance on Learning Outcome 2 and 3. It was also the case that, in a few centres, learners had done little more than record a few key facts unrelated to the organisation's objectives. A key to success here is to make sure that learners have a clear idea of the organisation's objectives from the outset of the study so that they can then relate to these objectives throughout their response. As such it would be acceptable to give the learners the organisation's objectives rather than require learners to discern these for themselves.

It was notable that where learners had used exemplar organisations from their own work experience, they produced a good in-depth study and this approach is to be commended where practicable. The next best approach in producing good quality work appears to be that based upon a visiting speaker or visit to the organisation, where some excellent studies were seen.

An approach which is to be discouraged, as it frequently leads to superficial work, is internet research. Where this approach had been taken, learners were unable to gather the evidence they required to successfully tackle the assessment.

In a couple of instances learners had only covered one organisation, which greatly limits the marks that can be awarded for this Learning Outcome. A balanced study of two organisations is essential.

It is acceptable to support learners with a resource bank of materials such as organisation structure charts, details on key roles in the organisation and organisational statements on company policies etc. Assessment should then be against the learners' interpretation, understanding and analysis of this evidence.

Learning Outcomes 2 and 3

This strand carries 40 of the 60 marks for this unit and evidently should constitute a substantial part of the assessment. It need not be based on the organisations studied in Learning Outcome 1, especially if they will not provide the evidence required, neither does it need to be based on just one organisation. It is however important that the organisation or organisations chosen do exemplify well one or more of the key business processes. A lot of exemplars seen were poorly chosen and offered little scope for learners to either illustrate the key business processes or the technology that supports them.

Examples of good work seen had good information on the type of technology or software used by the organisation to meet a particular key business process. The technology should be specific to the organisation studied, not generic. Answers where the learner proposes possible technological solutions are not acceptable.

Studies of Customer Relationship Management and People Management were often done well, but Supplier Management was often confused with service delivery and it was apparent that learners will need more help in clarifying these two key business processes before commencing the assessment.

The key business processes are only half of this assessment strand and as such should not be awarded more than half the potential marks.

Roughly half the marks come from the technologies that support the processes and generally this was poorly done. At the top of the range, learners had a clear understanding of the technology or software used by the organisation studied and they presented a sound argument. At the lower end of the range, learners had no idea what the organisation used and proposed all manner of, often inappropriate, potential technologies they might use.

Learning Outcome 4

Centres had evidently taken on board comments from the January exam window and many had approached the assessment with the correct focus. This is that the assessment focus is based on the business recommendations arising from playing the game and exemplified by suitable evidence. There were however still a few centres where learners had taken the wrong approach and written about playing the game and omitted to consider the business recommendations.

On the whole this was by far the best assessed aspect of this unit with many learners gaining good marks by presenting sensible business recommendations.

Choice of game played was broad with many excellent examples drawn from business simulations as well as much good work based on popular commercial simulation games. In selecting a suitable game, centres should consider what business principles will be illustrated or could be drawn out. Some business simulation games are quite mechanistic in their play and leave little room for learners to understand what principles are involved. As a result at the end of playing the game, the learner is unable to explain why they were successful (or not) and thus cannot create good recommendations.

It was apparent that individual centres had differing success in actually using some games, depending on the IT set up of their centre. Centres are strongly advised to trial software in advance of the assessment to ensure it functions correctly. Also it is worth noting that some internet based simulation games store the learner's game data off-site and this may even be lost after quite a short time period.

Business recommendations arising from playing the game were usually well made and appropriate and, as required by the assessment, formed the core of the evidence submitted. A few learners found it difficult then to relate these recommendations to their game playing experience but generally it was done well.

In one instance learners had embarked upon a small business enterprise as their simulation. Whilst this can be suitable it is not recommended given the limited time available (3 to 4 hours) for the learners to complete this aspect of the assessment.

Level 2 Unit 3 Effective Communication

General comments

The majority of centres submitted well organised work, with appropriate documentation, within the deadlines set by Edexcel.

The moderation process was greatly enhanced where centres had included:

- completed Candidate Record Sheets with detailed comments in the 'Description of Evidence' column
- clear annotation on the submitted work, particularly when indicating team/individual work
- evidence of internal standardisation
- assignment details.

Learning Outcome 1

Whilst many learners covered the three main types of communication media they often failed to make a clear reference to a business context, thereby restricting the marks available.

Marks were also restricted to lower Mark Bands where learners failed to explain, or justify, the choice of communications used for the team task.

Learning Outcome 2

The standard of the business-related communications was generally good, and reviews and diaries often made reference to the team contribution. Some centres also submitted tables of team members with reference to the documentation assigned to each member; these were particularly helpful during moderation, allowing the moderator to accurately assess each team member's contribution.

Learning Outcomes 3 and 4

It is essential that planning is upfront and not produced retrospectively. In order to be assessed in the higher Mark Bands, learners must provide detailed team plans with detailed notes to track progress. The team plan may be produced collectively, but the tracking process must be done on an individual basis. Diaries should indicate decisions made throughout the project and also provide a record of the learner's individual contribution to the team effort.

Learning Outcomes 3 and 5

The evidence for this Learning Outcome tended to be weaker than for the others. In order to be assessed in the higher Mark Bands learners must make a substantial evaluation of their work. Learners should be encouraged to consider their own performance in terms of the effectiveness of their communication with other team members and the effectiveness of the feedback given and received. Many learners failed to provide evidence of the impact of behaviour, attitude and actions on team performance. Learners should be encouraged to consider specific and sensible areas for improvement in order to justify higher marks.

Level 2 Unit 4 Skills for Innovation

General comments

In general, work submitted by centres was received well within the deadlines set by Edexcel. The appropriate documentation was included and was suitably packaged and presented.

Not all work submitted had been annotated. Where this had been done the moderation task was much easier and it became a straightforward task to see were centres had allocated marks. The completion of suitable assessment grids also varied between centres with one centre completing the grid incorrectly. It is vitally important that this process is accurately completed so that a fair assessment of learners work can be completed.

For future submissions centres should be encouraged to submit one copy of each assignment used instead of one copy per learners work. This will reduce the bulk of paper being handled considerably.

Very accurate assessment had been carried out by many centres and marks awarded were well within acceptable national standards. It is important to stress that all centres are required to carry out an internal moderation process on all portfolios to be submitted. This was not always the case and assessors' marks were at variance with the external moderators.

Learning Outcome 1

All work seen showed that learners had provided evidence of an investigation being carried out, using resources to gather information that was relevant to the case being studied. Where centres had briefed and prepared learners well for this task the work seen included well-written material with generic business documentation.

Spreadsheet models were included from all centres seen but the content and complexity of the spreadsheet models varied greatly across the centres. The better spreadsheets contained complex IF statements with suitable automation features and accessed the higher marks in Mark Band 3. Others contained a simple model that calculated averages or percentage of goods sold and remained within Mark Band 1. Centres should ensure that learners provide a formula print to support the model they have developed and to help in the understanding of the work being submitted.

Only one centre provided a breakdown of learners' marks for Learning Outcome 1. All marks awarded within this Learning Outcome should show scores that relate to:

- Exploring the Challenge
- Investigation
- Spreadsheet Model
- Consideration of options.

This will again greatly assist the moderation process and will ensure learners are not unfairly disadvantaged.

Learning Outcome 2

Most work seen identified suitable relevant legal and other constraints. Centres should encourage learners to explain the constraints in their own words rather than directly import information from the internet. This will then allow learners access to the higher Mark Band for this Learning Outcome. Every effort should also be made to link the constraints to the business challenge identified.

Learning Outcome 3

All work moderated provided some evidence of a business proposal presentation. The standard of the proposal again varied across the centres. In the better centres the proposal submitted was well structured and professionally submitted. Questions were handled knowledgeably and it could easily be seen that stakeholders had given their full backing to the proposal and even negotiated a mutually agreeable way forward.

At the lower end of the scale, learners had provided basic information or presented information that had no relevance to their audience and was wholly based on the learners' research work. Some portfolios seen did not show the learners' understanding of the audience or the purpose of the presentation, nor did they provide enough information to enable a decision to be made.

Level 2 Unit 5 Technology Systems

General Comments

As might be expected for a unit that covered some traditional areas of the IT curriculum, there was much good work which was accurately assessed. Where problems arose they were usually in interpreting the Marking Grid and presenting the evidence that was required to support the marks.

The unit divides into two themes Networks and Databases and these are considered separately.

NETWORKS

Learning Outcome 1 (Network Components)

Generally this was done well with components identified well but sometimes explanation was insufficient for the top Mark Band. Learners need to understand and explain the function of each component for the top Mark Band marks.

Learning Outcome 2 (Network Assembly and Testing)

This was solely assessed by the centre using Marking Grid B.

Learning Outcome 3 (Business Continuity)

Performance on this Learning Outcome varied between either very competent and informed answers or answers that showed a very limited understanding of what was expected here. At best students covered a wide range of issues successfully meeting much of the top Mark Band criteria. Unfortunately there were also a considerable number of learners who had not considered the business-related aspect of this unit and who offered sparse information beyond ensuring the network functioned effectively. Generally the strand was accurately assessed by centres.

Learning Outcome 5 (Review of the Network)

This was often the weak point of the network aspect of this unit. Few learners were able to engage in a 'thorough' review, with most presenting very simple accounts of the 'how I did it' type of approach. Learners should be encouraged to adopt a more critical approach to this learning objective.

DATABASES

Learning Outcome 4 (Database Structure, Automation and Retrieval)

Quite a few centres used their own database tasks for this unit. Where this is the case, care needs to be taken that learners don't waste time on tasks that are not required for this qualification. Whilst it is possible to reuse old assessment tasks from other qualifications, it is preferred that centres tailor their assessment task to the unit requirements. As learners are working to a time limitation in controlled assessment, it is highly desirable that they are focused on relevant activities for the whole of the assessment time.

Although a relational database is not required, most centres did use a relational database and the work was usually done well. Automated features varied in quality and complexity with many meeting the requirement to 'enhance efficiency' for the top Mark Band marks. Retrieval of information from the database was usually done well, although in many cases it was a 'guessing game' as to what information the learners had been asked to retrieve. It is very important that a copy of the database task is included with the sample sent for moderation and that learners make clear the criteria for their searches and reports. Reports were reasonable although a large number of candidates failed to appreciate the need to address a specified audience and purpose. In this respect some centres, in reusing an old assessment task, had

failed to give learners any suitable indication of 'for whom' or 'why' the reports were being produced and so learners had little idea of how they should customise and present their report.

Learning Outcome 5 (Review of Database)

As with networks, this was the least successful strand in terms of evidence and learners frequently produced 'what I did' accounts rather than an effective review of their database system. It is essential that reviewers are briefed on how to make useful and relevant comments on the database they are reviewing so as to enable the learner to identify potential improvements.

Level 2 Unit 6 Multimedia

General Comments

Not all centres realised that they had to send the highest and lowest scoring pieces of work, and some centres were unaware of the new requirements for the size of the sample when compared to the overall size of the cohort, leading to much contact being needed between moderator and centre in order to obtain the correct amount of work.

The majority of centres were using the sample assignments from Edexcel. The assignments were applied to different contexts depending on the organisations available near the centre or consortia. The organisations chosen in some cases seemed to have limited scope for motivating the learners, which came across in some of the evaluative work produced, particularly that of more able learners.

Learning Outcome 1

When describing uses of multimedia, some learners tended to include a preamble which defined what examples of multimedia were; this seemed to be unnecessary and learners would be better off concentrating on the examples used by the businesses and organisations.

Annotated screenshots were an effective method of introducing the work for Learning Outcome 1 and where they were used they set the scene well for the description that followed. Centres might find it useful to closely refer to the following definitions from the specification when working with learners on this Learning Outcome:

- Multimedia: combinations of sound, animation, still and moving images
- Design features: content, navigation, mix of digital components, interactivity
- Business relevant objectives: promotion and advertising, education and training, entertainment and leisure

The best work made a clear connection between the multimedia used and the business-relevant objectives of the organisation that produced and published the content.

Learning Outcome 2

Multimedia products were variable in quality. Video was often unedited and many virtual tours were simply a linear set of slides or pages, which offered interactivity, but were not entirely fit for purpose. It was felt that some learners focused too much on using the features of the software available rather than on making a multimedia product that was truly fit for purpose and met the Learning Outcome requirements; where this was the case it was often due to the specified requirements not being fully considered by the learner in planning and implementation of the product.

The best work that was seen struck a balance between using a range of software features and ensuring that the specified requirements were met. For example, an embedded video of a reasonable file size is no more likely to score marks in flv format than in wmv, especially if that video has been produced using Windows Movie Maker; it would be a waste of time to then re-encode that video using another piece of software unless there was a clear issue in meeting the Learning Outcome by using a certain format.

There were many technical issues with work presented on CD or DVD in this series. While this remains the best way to present work of this nature, centres and learners must ensure that, particularly with websites, images and links work correctly once transferred to the disc. There were many instances of broken images, and one example, that resulted from poor coding of the websites, which included the original drive letter in the tag.

Learning Outcome 3

In evaluation, many learners did not refer to the feedback given by their peers, and yet in some cases this was all that was presented. The best evaluations of the multimedia products were clear and incorporated extensive feedback from reviewers and a realistic assessment of fitness for purpose.

Level 2 Unit 7 Managing Projects

General comments

Most centres appeared to have assessed this unit in conjunction with Unit 6, however in some instances it appeared that the evidence for Unit 7 was produced retrospectively. This restricted learners from achieving the higher Marks Bands for some Learning Outcomes.

Learning Outcome 1

Some centres had not given their learners the opportunity to investigate Industry Standard IT projects, which restricted the learners to Mark Band 1 as they were unable to discuss the objectives and outcomes of the project. Many projects studied were not IT-related in the sense required by the specification, for example 'buying a computer for personal use' would not be classed as an IT Project.

Learners should be encouraged to research Industry Standard IT projects that include stated objectives and outcomes so that they are able to identify and expand on the project's success or failure. The key success factors and reasons for failure that learners need to focus on are identified in Learning Outcome 1 of the specification.

The hints and tips produced by most learners were very vague and did not always demonstrate an understanding of project management techniques. Learners could use the research from the first part of this Learning Outcome as a basis for their hints and tips. Some centres misinterpreted the Assessment Criteria, with learners discussing general management techniques instead.

Learning Outcome 2

Many of the project proposals were to a good standard. Centres are advised to refer to the specification for Learning Outcome 2 to ensure that all areas of the project proposal are covered and learners are clear as to who the stakeholders of their project are.

Most learners had included a project proposal and an upfront workable plan. Few learners used techniques such as milestones to achieve higher marks. Plans tended to be brief and in some instances the assessment criteria had been misinterpreted and the plan included the generation of evidence for all Learning Outcomes 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.

Greater detail in terms of sub-tasks should be considered by learners. A sub-task such as 'make product' is not sufficiently detailed for marks in Mark Band 2 since it would not help learners to plan and track their progress when creating the final product.

Interim reviews were often included, but unfortunately these were at inappropriate points in the project and therefore of limited use in managing the project.

It must be stressed to learners that the project plan must be produced upfront, and not retrospectively, to meet the requirements of the Marking Grid.

Learning Outcome 3

Where learners had tracked their progress on the plan this was limited to brief comments. This meant that it was difficult to assess whether learners had made good use of the plan to track and communicate progress. Learners should be encouraged to keep an ongoing diary of their progress throughout the project execution that identifies how they have used the plan and communicated progress.

Where interim reviews had been carried out, a limited number of learners commented on the interim reviews and no learners adjusted their plan as a result of the reviews. Marks in Mark Band 2 should be supported by either amended plans or details of 'how' plans have been amended - it is highly unlikely that a learner will produce an initial plan which requires no amendments through the course of the

project execution. For marks in Mark Band 2, learners should have made good use of the review process to assess progress i.e. included a clear record of the review, identified risks and adjusting the plan where necessary.

Since this Learning Outcome has considerably more marks than the previous two, centres can equate this to the amount of work that learners should be expected to evidence for this strand.

Learning Outcome 4

This Learning Outcome reviews the project in terms of considering the extent to which the project objectives have been met and identification of factors that contributed to the project outcomes. It is not intended to be a review of the final product. This criterion was often misinterpreted by centres and it appeared that learners' reviews were passed upon Unit 6 Learning Outcome 3.

Few learners had reviewed the project objectives and reflected on whether or not they had been met. This made it difficult for learners discuss the factors that had contributed to the project outcomes. Only limited marks can be awarded for reviews that do not consider project management but instead consider the product.

Some learners did produce detailed reviews of their product but without any reflection on the project management techniques used. This restricted the learners to the lower end of Mark Band 1. Feedback from others should focus on the project management techniques used as well as how well the final product meets the objectives.

Statistics

Level 2 Unit 1 The Potential of Technology

	Max. Mark	A*	A	B	C
Raw boundary mark	60	52	44	36	28
Points Score	10	8	6	4	2

Level 2 Unit 2 Exploring Organisations

	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

	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

	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

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

Level 2 Unit 6 Multimedia

	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

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

Notes

Centres are reminded that this is the first summer examination for this new specification and that boundaries may change in the following series

Maximum Mark (raw): the mark corresponding to the sum total of the marks shown on the Mark Scheme or Marking Grids.

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

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