Examiners' Report November 2007

IGCSE ICT (4385)

Edexcel is one of the leading examining and awarding bodies in the UK and throughout the world. We provide a wide range of qualifications including academic, vocational, occupational and specific programmes for employers.

Through a network of UK and overseas offices, Edexcel's centres receive the support they need to help them deliver their education and training programmes to learners.

For further information please call our Customer Services on + 44 1204 770 696, or visit our website at www.edexcel-international.org.uk

Contents Page

Examiner Report
4385 1F

General Comments

It was evident that centres had given candidates good advice on the completion of papers as there were no instances of additional sheets being given to candidates.

Report on Candidates' Responses

Q1 (a)(b)
Good answers given by all candidates. Centres had prepared candidates well for this learning Objective.

Q2
This question also produced good responses from candidates. The use of software packages was also a strong point for students at this level.

Q3 (a)
Answers given here depended on how well centres had prepared their students to interpret database structure. In (b) the same reasoning applied. Some candidates were fully aware of the nature and reason for a key field. In (c) most candidates could provide two out of three reasons for using a computerised database.

Q4 (a)(b)(c)(d)
The majority of candidates gave very good responses for this spreadsheet questions In (e all candidates failed to produce any suitable advantages to the use of spreadsheets.

Q5 (a)
Most candidates gave two different types of validation checks. Candidates struggled in part (b) few could provide suitable validation checks for the context given.

Q6
Poorly answered by most candidates. Candidates did not seem to be aware of the link between the use of bar codes and data being entered into the database.

Q7 (a)(b)
Very poorly answered few candidates could explain the need for data conversion and why an automated system was required in this instance.

Q8 (a)(b)(d)
Good responses from all candidates. Centres had covered this aspect of networking very well. In (e) some candidates struggled to give an adequate answer that fully stated the benefits gained from a networked system.

Q9
Few candidates responded well to this question based on operating system tasks

Q 10 (a)(b)(c)
At this level candidates were fully aware of the nature of the storage device required but could not provide a suitable reason for using that device.

Q 11 (a)(b)
At this level candidates demonstrated a knowledge of the guidelines applicable to working with computers but could not provide suitable reasons fro applying them

Q12 (a)(b)(c)
Very few candidates successfully attempted this question on stock control

Q13 (a)(b)
The better candidates were able to give full answers in this section of the control question. In (c) and (d) few candidates at this level could provide the responses required to explain the situations developed in the question.

Q 14 (a)(b)
No candidates were successful on this question. It appears that candidates at this level were not conversant with the tasks carried out by a systems analyst.

4385 2H

General Comments

It was evident that centres had given candidates good advice on the completion of papers as there were no instances of additional sheets being given to candidates. Candidate's responses were direct and to the point.

Report on Candidates' Responses

Q1 (a) (b) (c)

Full answers given by the majority of candidates. The papers soon showed that candidates fully understood the relative capacities of storage mediums and the uses they could be put to.

Q2 (a) (b)

Another question were full an meaning full answers were provided by candidates. Matters of health and safety are important issues and candidates answered well

Q3 (a)

Most candidates struggled here when trying to identify the transaction and master file. This was one instance were answers depended on how well a centre had covered this topic. In (b) (i) (ii) most candidates could not identify the correct
father and son file, but in (iii) failed to explain how the system would work to produce the father file when the system failed. In (c) No candidate could explain how the sales report could be generated.

Q4 (a) (b) (c)

Good answers were provided by all candidates. This aspect of control had been covered well by the centres sitting this paper.

Q5 (a)

Good answers given for system analysis. In (b) and (c) answers were centre specific. Some candidates became confused over what happened at the Design stage and what exactly went on at Implementation.

Q6 (a)

Candidates were well versed in tasks attached to function keys. Full answers were given in most instances. In (b) candidates gave good descriptions for the mice applications given

Q7 (a) (b)

Candidates showed a very good knowledge of computer software package application with most gaining full marks here.

Q8 (a) (b)

Candidates demonstrated a good knowledge of database structures and were fully aware of the purpose of the key field. In (c) too many candidates are still under the impression that data coding (in the context of the question) is associated with secrecy and privacy of data. Centres must instruct candidates to read the context of the question and answer accordingly

Q9 (a)

Correct answers were given by all candidates. In (b) only the better candidates were able to provide an IF statement that worked for the example given.

Q10
Mixed responses were given by candidates. This is another example where some centres had prepared their candidates better than others for verification and validation of data

Q 11
Very few candidates could answer this question sufficiently well enough to gain maximum marks. Candidates from most centres have great difficulties in answering questions related to the function of an operating system.

Q12
Candidates proved their knowledge of sensors and data transmission. Some candidates omitted the need to include some form of ADC conversion – either incorporated in the sensor or as a separate unit.

Q13 (a)
Most candidates provided a workable network diagram that met the requirements of the question set. In (b) only the better candidates were able to provide the additional components needed to create the network.

Q 14 (a) (b)
This question was poorly answered by all candidates. It appeared that centres had not covered the in sufficient depth the role and purpose of bar coded in a stock control situation.

Paper 03, Set Tasks and Project

Electronic submission
There is currently no provision for electronic submission of paper 3A, the project.
Set tasks may be submitted electronically. The procedure for doing so is given on the web site:
http://www.edexcelinternational.org/VirtualContent/82378/ICT

Projects
Most of the work was presented in a satisfactory manner, but the following guidelines may enable some centres to improve their candidates' marks.

- Each project should have a cover sheet, clearly labelled with a minimum of the candidate's name, candidate's number and the centre number. A completed version of the IGCSE ICT coursework cover sheet would be suitable for this purpose. The sheet may be downloaded from:
  http://www.edexcelinternational.org/VirtualContent/82378/ICT_coursework_cover_sheet.pdf
- Projects should be securely bound. Spiral binding or secure stapling will usually suffice. A single treasury tag or length of string is not really sufficient as pages can easily be detached when the project is handled.
- Projects should have a contents page and matching page numbers. These could be written in by hand when the project is finished. It is not compulsory but it is always useful to know where candidates think they have put the different sections of their project.
- Projects should be presented in a logical order, preferably Identify, Analyse, Design, Implement and Evaluate.

The IGCSE Coursework Guide for Students gives detailed information on what is required. The guide may be downloaded from:
http://www.edexcel-international.org/VirtualContent/83088/ICT_guide.pdf

It was obvious that a number of candidates were submitting GCE O Level style projects. There is no prohibition on this but candidates must be made aware of the differences in the specification between O Level and IGCSE. Much of the work in an O Level project is superfluous to the IGCSE requirements and therefore gains no marks. e.g. most of the systems analysis. On the other hand, the IGCSE requires much better evidence of the design and production process. An O Level project would require a substantial rewrite to gain the same degree of credit in the IGCSE.

Set Tasks

- The Set Tasks do not need to be bound. They are best presented as loose leaf in an A4 plastic pocket or document wallet. Markers need to be able to compare pages, e.g. Design and final product. This is much easier with loose pages. If staples or other fastening methods are used, care should be taken not to obscure or damage the work.
- The Set Tasks and Projects should be submitted as two separate bundles of work. They are unlikely to be allocated to the same marker. Putting a candidate's work into a single binding must be avoided as the Set Tasks will have to be removed and this may result in the work being damaged.
- All pieces of work should be clearly labelled with the candidate's name, number and task identification. The task identification becomes essential if a candidate does not complete all of the tasks as it can sometimes be hard to work out which task the candidate thought they were doing.
- Extra work must not be submitted. There are marks for sticking to the required

number of pages. There are no marks for anything which has not been specifically asked for in the tasks.
- Anything that the candidate thinks is worth a mark should be annotated, explained and presented in task order. Markers do their best to find everything which is worthy of a mark but some candidates have the ability to present their work in the most obscure and muddled way possible.
- All of the tasks have a design element. The correct sequence of events is design it first, make it afterwards. Doing things in reverse order often results in lower marks.

Task 1a. Web page design.
This was generally done well, weaker candidates tended to miss out some of the essential detail given in the Case Study, such as links to spreadsheet and database.

Task 1b. Web page production.
Candidates should be reminded that the completed pages must match the design. One of the commonest errors was to design in portrait orientation and then submit a landscape web page, with no explanation for the change.

Task 1c. Mark book design
This was generally done well, weaker candidates tended to miss out some of the essential detail given in the Case Study, such as areas for grades and grade boundaries.

Task 1d. Mark book production.
The main problems here were:
- failure to sort the students
- weak annotation which failed to explain how the calculations worked.

Task 1e. The summary spreadsheet, macro design.
The macro designs were, in many cases, obviously reverse engineered after the macro had been produced by a macro recorder. Such designs did not usually meet the design criteria. Many candidates produced macro designs which would transfer one set of marks but failed to repeat the process for the remaining classes.

Task 1f. The summary spreadsheet, macro production.
For those candidates who made the macro, the main weakness was poor annotation to explain how it worked.

Task 2a. Customer input screen.
Most candidates could identify sensible fields but few of them put in explanatory annotations.
Validations and customisations were usually included by the better candidates but annotation was rare.

Task 2b. Making the database.
This was usually done well but as in previous tasks, annotation was rare.

Task 2c. A surprisingly wide range of candidates tackled this task and were able to score well at it.

Task 2d. The cover sheet form.
Given that cover sheets for projects are available from the Edexcel web site, many candidates missed out essential items such as centre name and number. There were some excellent examples of cover sheets which did contain all the required detail, some of which were almost indistinguishable from the official ones. Other candidates submitted equally good sheets of their own design.

Task 2e. The join and simple search.
The join was often made incorrectly by weaker candidates but most were still able to gain marks by making an appropriate query, albeit based on the wrong setup.

Task 2f. The complex search. This caused a lot of difficulty, even for the better candidates, mainly because they failed to set up a search which would return results from two years.

Task 2g. The letter.
As in previous years, most candidates were able to score well in this task. Weak points were poor design, rather than poor mail merge skills.