GCE EXAMINERS' REPORTS

GCE (LEGACY)
ICT
AS/Advanced

SUMMER 2018

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IT1 INFORMATION SYSTEMS

Comments on Specific Questions

Q1. A surprising number of candidates still do not realise what a command line interface is and think that it is all to do with giving vocal commands. Candidates were more aware of a games playing device but many could not name a specific device and only the best candidates were able to give two advantages.

Q2. When discussing the advantages, again candidates dropped marks by describing one as being faster to enter data, which was precluded by the question. A significant number of candidates could mention value judgements but gave an example to do with coarsening data by not having enough choices.

Q3. Most students could mention some costs but struggled to give realistic examples to illustrate the stage or used 'data collecting' to exemplify data collection etc.

Q4. A number of candidates mentioned software or data which were precluded by the question. Many candidates could mention 1 or 3 factors but only the better candidates could go on and expand on these two factors or mention a third.

Q5. The advantages of CAD/CAM seem to be an area not covered by some centres despite it not being new to the specification. Despite there being a large number of possible advantages weaker candidates struggled to mention more than 1. Candidates also dropped marks by giving generic computer advantages such as easier to edit or saving on staff.

Q6. Weaker candidates dropped marks by discussing letters/letterheads when the question was about presentation software. It would be worth candidates learning what templates and animated transitions actually are. Many candidates seemed unsure of what data compression is and even more unsure of its benefit.

Q7. Most candidates were able to answer quite well here, only the very weakest could not give the three main components of an expert system or give some benefits.

Q8.   The very weakest candidates could only mention 1 or 2 methods but on the whole candidates wrote quite well here. They were able to mention 2 or more methods, extend them and give advantages.

Q9.   A significant number of candidates were not able to discuss their knowledge of spreadsheets and their advantages to business.

Q10.   Again candidates who had not had ownership of their spreadsheets were unable to explain why they had used the functions that they had. It is much better for candidates to design and create a simpler spreadsheet, which is their own, rather than use a semi-prepared complex spreadsheet.

   (a)   Candidates could often state how they had used 1 of the functions but only better candidates could describe why.
   (b)   Candidates still mix up range and length checks and that they think spinners are validation. Drop down lists, length checks on names, data type, vlookup and link to list are not suitable validation checks for this type of question.
   (c)   To get the first mark, candidates need to mention the type and purpose of the macro, with the second mark for describing its benefit. Examples of the type of answers expected are well documented in the mark scheme.
   (d)   Most candidates could state what the sort was doing but very few could describe why. More candidates seemed unable to describe the use and purpose of a search they used.

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IT2 PRESENTING INFORMATION TASK

General points

Most centres clearly understand the assessment requirements of this Unit. High standards of work was seen in all three tasks. Centres seem to spend a great deal of time on this Unit.

Centres should ensure they see a copy of the moderators report as some centres make the same mistakes each year.

Where centres are misinterpreting the mark scheme it is in the same areas as before. Most areas were well done but it is worth re-iterating comments made about some problem areas.

Background and Analysis

Analysis of ethos or house style by looking at three documents produced by the organisation.

Although this area is beginning to improve there are still some centres who award marks for descriptions rather than an analysis.

Candidates should look at the three documents collectively, **not individually**, and ask themselves two questions.
- What is the house style/ethos?
- What tools and techniques are used to portray this image?

Some candidates still only describe colour schemes, fonts etc.

This is a piece of **analysis** not a description. It is not the mission statement of the company or a general description gleaned from a website.

Task 1: <u>Desktop Publishing</u>

Centres are to be congratulated on encouraging pupils to give clear evidence enabling moderators to support most centres' marking in this section.

Image/ethos/house style.

Some candidates still confused image or ethos or house style with the target audience. Candidates should ask themselves two questions.

- *What house style/image/ethos do I want to portray?*
- *How am I going to get that image over in my leaflet?*

Detailed design of the document

This was very much improved.

Moderators wish to thank those centres who encouraged their candidates to use highlighter pens to make the features stand out.

Use of basic features
Marks should not be awarded for any feature which does not appear on the final printed document. Some candidates clearly show the construction of the header and footer, page number but this does not appear on both sides of the final printed document and should not be credited.

Use of Advanced features
It would be helpful if centres would indicate on the IT2 marksheet which advanced features were used. Here supporting evidence is absolutely essential for the features used.

Customised tables

This is cell merging or rotation of text within a cell not shading borders or cells.

Customised bullets

These must be constructed using graphics from an external graphics file or clipart package and not the wing/webdings or fonts available internally in Word.

Layering

A reminder that layering is not moving to objects to one is on top of the other. It is showing the objects, one in front and one behind and then reversing their positions.

Line spacing

Before and after evidence of line spacing must be clear. Sometimes there is no perceptible difference in the evidence or in the position of the text on the final document.

Superscripts and subscripts

Both needed to be used and it is essential that screenshot before and after evidence is given or candidates will not be awarded the mark

Task 2: <u>Automated Document</u>

Design of document

This was generally well done but candidates must remember to plan their **<u>three</u>** macros on their design and identify the **<u>mailmerged fields</u>** not just say address block: - what are the actual fields to be used?
A few candidates did not achieve the 'data' mark because they just wrote 'body of letter and did not describe the content of the letter.

Use of Basic Features

This was generally well done but some centres did award marks when there was a clear spelling or capital letter mistake or inconsistencies in the use of capital letters in titles.

Use of Advanced features

- Candidates should not be given credit for macros which already exist on the toolbar e.g. print and save.
- No copy and paste macros. Please note that **unless the macro code is included,** no marks should be awarded for macros even if construction evidence is there.

Task 3: <u>Website or Presentation</u>

Again the evidence for this was generally very good. Most centres chose to do a presentation rather than a website.

Basic features

Background style

This must be original and not chosen from a library of design styles.

Animations and transitions using internal features of the software provided for candidates use.
Again usually very well done.
For new centres it might be useful to note for candidates doing web pages:

- For animations candidates could use scrolling banners /leader boards/interactive galleries etc.
- For transitions they can use rollover buttons or some edited the html coding to change the colour sequence from one page to another. If the software has linked features, another alternative for transitions could be interactive image effects.

Evidence must be clearly provided. It must be made clear if the technique is used as transitions and not repeated for animations.

Hotspot/ hyperlinks and bookmarks were generally well done with good supporting evidence.

Advanced features

Use of Sound

Again well done. Most candidates now attempt to capture sound or create original sound rather than load sound files in from a library or backing store in order to gain the extra mark.

Use of original video.

It must be an original video. Candidates should take their own video footage or take their own original photos for use in the film.
Videos downloaded from YouTube are not original videos.
If they use images from the internet it is not original and should not be awarded any marks. They could potentially still be awarded the two marks for editing.

Use of original animation using external software packages

This was generally well done but a complex animation is not 3 frames/clones where an object moves a very small distance in a straight line. Three frames were given as a guide to **3 different events.**

Evaluation

The quality of evaluations has steadily improved. However some seem to award marks for very shallow evaluations lacking any analysis and moderators could not support the centre marks. Again this section was a clear differentiator with a wide variety in the standards of candidates' quality and quantity of answers.

Compression and storage techniques

Centre understanding of this section of the mark scheme is now very good for the most part. Candidates are expected to discuss in detail the relative merits of at least 3 different compression techniques they have used. They should identify and relate it to their files used and justify their choice of the techniques used.

A few centres **still incorrectly** awarded marks for zipped files: and reducing text field length in the database

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IT3 USE AND IMPACT OF ICT

Comments on Specific Questions

Q1.   On the whole this question was quite well answered with most candidates being able to give two factors.

Q2.   A significant number of candidates lost marks by concentrating on costing, which was not one of the factors given. Candidates should study the mark schemes to see the sort of points that should be made and the level of data required.

Q3.   Another question which was reasonably well answered, with less candidates than usual giving answers more suitable to ring and star.

Q4.   Candidates dropped marks here by discussing health issues and not being precise enough i.e. by being able not work anywhere and not considering the signal.

Q5.   Candidates need to concentrate on stations and not users, i.e. it is not monitoring of users, nor is it tasks that are normally done from the server.

Q6.   This really stretched some candidates in having to find four advantages for both the company and the employee. There was a tendency to just rehash the employee's advantages.

Q7.   Most candidates could give one or two factors but could not give a full example/extension to develop the points far enough.

Q8.   Candidates wanted just to state the three types of maintenance rather than think and explain what they entailed. The better candidates who did think, did score well on this question.

Q9.   Some candidates did not read the question properly and tried to give answers relating to responsibilities or respecting the rights of others. Most candidates could make 2 or 3 points.

Q10. Candidates did score more marks this year than they have in previous years on this sort of question but they did get confused between misuse, privacy and disinformation. Studying the mark scheme would give a better idea of what is required.

Q11. The question was about establishing procedures that an organisation can put in place to minimise or prevent the threat. So candidates needed to talk about planning a backup strategy not just doing backups etc.

Q12.   Candidates had to not include points from physical security, code of conduct or operational procedures which they had written about in previous questions. Most candidates were able to write about 2 or more extension points.

Q13.   It is very disappointing at this level to see so many candidates who cannot explain what an attribute and entity are.

Q14.   All candidates have used database management systems, a query language and produced a data dictionary but only the most able were able to mention more than 1 or 2 points. Candidates should not be using tools in their database project without really understanding their purpose.

Q15.   Security seemed to be the only benefit known about by most of the candidates but those that thought a little did produce some good answers.

Q16.   Most candidates scored quite well on this question but there were some strange tables seen this year. Candidates throw marks away by not labelling the key fields and putting the same key fields in more than one table.

Q17.   Quite well answered by the majority with most being able to score at least 2.

Q18.   Some candidates still confuse distributed databases with distributed processing. On the whole most had a fair attempt at the definition and could give at least one advantage and disadvantage.

Q19.   Candidates had a fair attempt at one example but only the best were able to produce 2 examples.

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IT4 RELATIONAL DATABASE PROJECT

GENERAL COMMENTS

A few centres clearly did not read the moderators report sent to them last year and they still made the same mistakes. Many high quality projects were seen. Most of the samples submitted showed that centres have a clear understanding of the requirements of the specification and spend a great deal of time on producing these projects.
Many centres provided helpful teacher comments and marking grids to show where marks had been awarded.

BACKGROUND AND ANALYSIS

Background
Well done.

Analysis and user requirements

This should be written up **as though an end user had been interviewed or consulted** in depth. It should not appear to be a retrospective list of what they did in design or candidates must lose a mark.

Hardware requirements.

Note hardware must be a complete list including mention of keyboards, mouse, type of monitor, type of printer, USB port or other backup devices.

DESIGN

Again it is worth noting that implemented features are not design. **No marks can be awarded under design for already implemented features. There must a clear and separate section.**

Design of queries
Candidates should be encouraged to produce more original and diverse queries.

Again some candidates do not seem to understand the difference between purpose and reason.
Although only in a few centres, there is still some confusion about the number and type of query required in the new specification.

Design of validation

Most centres now understand that:

- **Two different types of validation** techniques are required not two range checks
If a candidate does 2 range checks the second range check should not be awarded any marks in design implementation or testing.

- **Not presence checks unless the =NULL statement is extended with something original other than the default selection.**

- **Not data type checks.**

- **Drop down list /combo boxes and input mask wizards provided by Access are not acceptable** as suitable validation techniques. Candidates should not be discouraged from using such techniques but they cannot be awarded marks in the validation section. Validation using input mask wizards should not be awarded any marks.

Design of reports
Again improved but centres should note design of calculations need a detailed explanation.

Design of automated routines
Again centres should note;
- Timers / =Now() etc / =Date() by themselves are not regarded as sufficiently complex to count as and automated routine.
- Design of buttons to go from form to form (wizards) are not original code.
- Candidates should not have implemented solutions as their design

IMPLEMENTATION

Most candidates gave good evidence of implementation.

Reports must have original headers and original footers. Many implement original headers but use the default footers. Original footers **does not** include date/page no generated by the wizard. It does not include a result of a calculation or function as this will already have been awarded a mark.

Suitable test data should be used to show sorted and grouped data on the final report **not just construction evidence**. Splash screens and security VB should be more clearly separated out as two different routines. Candidates are advised not to merge them into one routine.

TESTING

Most candidates had good and detailed test plans.

Calculation in query or form should be tested. This means the **result** of the calculation should be in the test plan before running the test (dry running). It is not good enough to simply say 'yes it works as you can see in my screenshot' How do we know that is the correct total? Some candidates showed very good screenshots of testing the calculation on the on screen calculator and then comparing the result with that in the form.

USER DOCUMENTATION

This is much improved.

Centres should note;

- In user documentation candidates should **show before and after** in the add a record; edit a record and delete a record section. It is **not enough to say click a button** when describing how to add, edit, delete data and run different queries. Candidates should not it is not how to construct a query so there should be no evidence of queries in design view. In 'User documentation' we want to see evidence of how each of the different types of query are run.
- Disaster recovery needs recovery instructions not just backup. Disaster recover should be extended to a detailed description on how the database can be recovered and reinstalled not just backup. It also requires a level of detail. It is not sufficient to say *'the technician backs it up at night and he will recover it if is gets corrup*t', or any similar general statement.

EVALUATION
The candidates are responding by being more critical and analytical. However it still tends to be an area where some centres are slightly over generous.