



General Certificate of Education

Information and Communication Technology 6520

Unit 3 Coursework: The Use of Generic Application Software for Task Solution

Report on the Examination

2008 examination – January series

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Work submitted by centres was often based on providing a solution to a task-based problem using spreadsheet software although database solutions were occasionally seen. Some candidates are attempting “systems” for this module, which demands only a task-based solution, and these candidates were not always best served by this approach which introduced layers of complexity which we would expect candidates to deal with in module ICT6. While it is always encouraging to see candidates being challenged academically in some cases the burden of this additional work appeared to make it difficult for the candidates to complete the major requirements of the specification section for ICT3 satisfactorily.

Specification

The Input, Processing and Output needs to be clear. A common issue is the candidate stating that a process needs to take place but does not provide adequate detail to explain how the process would be performed. Using worked examples can help the candidate to perform better in this section especially when calculations are required.

Providing adequate evidence to support a third party implementation is still an issue for some. Often a visual layout of the spreadsheet is generated but the underlying formulae are absent. Full third party implementation is only feasible if all aspects of the solution are designed in detail. Where macros are included there have to be designs present. Candidates who use complex macros which are integral to the solution in their spreadsheets must show these designs using a suitable technique.

Testing the solution will be critical for the candidate in terms of gaining access to the higher marks. It helps with assessing the quality of the solution, is assessed in its own right and provides evidence for the evaluation work.

Testing is intended to be based on clear planning which aims to test the viability and effectiveness of the whole solution not just individual components e.g. validation or navigation.

Implementation

A commentary is expected in this section that details all the software features used by the candidates with clear hardcopy / screenshot evidence. It is only necessary to include one sample of each type of feature rather than repetitively show the same feature many times. The emphasis is on showing what features have been used and why they have used and not in a step by step approach of how to build the solution.

Evidence for the quality of the implementation can be from the testing section but it is critical for the candidate to provide documentary evidence to prove that they had met the assessment objectives. There must be clear proof to establish that the solution described has been built and to show what skills and techniques were deployed. E.g. spreadsheet solutions must include printouts of the formulae used where the cell references can be clearly identified and checked were necessary.

Testing

It is critical that the fundamental requirements of the solution are fully tested and that hard copy evidence of this is included.

Some candidates had adopted a style of presentation that used images that were over cropped and consequently too small to read.

Showing corrective action was too often ignored or attempted very simplistically. Testing should take place as the solution is developed and candidates should follow their test plan and report

on their successes and failures. Candidates then have the opportunity to show the problems that occurred, the steps they took to solve these problems and any subsequent retesting to show success. Adding one or two corrections to the cosmetic appearance of a spreadsheet does not constitute taking full corrective action for a solution.

Evaluation

Candidates should demonstrate their understanding of the principles of logical evaluation against the user requirements and be examined on their ability to apply their knowledge to their own specific problem.

User Documentation

User documentation was well attempted but some candidates produced user guides that describe the steps needed to build or amend the solution and so provide technical documentation as opposed to the documentation an end user would need to operate the solution.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.