



GCSE

Business and Communication Systems

General Certificate of Secondary Education **J230**

OCR Report to Centres June 2016

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Reports should be read in conjunction with the published question papers and mark schemes for the examination.

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A265 Businesses and their communication systems

General Comments:

It was pleasing to see that nearly all candidates attempted all, or nearly all, questions as this increases candidates' chances of achieving marks.

It is important that candidates are able to apply their answers to the context of the business (T-Shirt printing business).

The main issues this year echoed those of recent examination sessions. Responses to the extended answers questions (worth six marks) typically asserted that an action (such as more customers) would have an impact on profit (eg increased profit) without explaining the linkage via revenue. Very few candidates appeared to have an understanding that profits are determined by the difference between revenue and costs, and that that a change in business activity is likely to have an impact on both revenue and costs and hence the impact on profit is uncertain but predictable if certain consequences follow. For example an increase in customers may well result in an increase in revenue but it will also result in an increase in costs, hence the impact on profit will depend on the extent to which both increase. A number of the six mark questions contained contextual information in the stem (for example 2d and 6d). Candidates who drew on this information when discussing the impact on the business tended to achieve higher marks than those candidates who gave generic answers.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Question No.

1a Nearly all candidates correctly identified the five errors with the draft document.

1b Most candidates identified that there would be a negative impact on customers' perceptions of the business, relatively few then developed this by explaining how the business would be affected, for example by a reduction in customers or sales.

1c Most candidates were able to give at least one benefit to the business. Weaker responses either gave benefits to customers or gave statements such as 'cheaper', 'quicker' 'easier' etc. that, because they were not qualified (e.g. 'quicker than sending a letter') were awarded no marks.

1d Nearly all candidates correctly identified the relevant device for each activity.

1e Most candidates gained at least one mark for a valid benefit or drawback.

2ai Most candidates recognised that liability refers to the extent to which the owner of the business is responsible for repaying the debts of the business. Most then gained at least two marks for relating this either to the impact on the owner (loss of personal wealth) or the cause (indebtedness of the business). Relatively few scored full marks for doing both.

2aii Most candidates scored one or two marks, usually for stating that the owner is their 'own boss' and can keep the (net) profits. A small number of responses were too vague to be rewarded, for example by confusing profits with income or 'money' or by referring to the lack of 'paperwork' without specifying what this 'paperwork' involved.

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2b A similar pattern of marks was observed here as with question 2aii. For example weaker responses referred to the need for 'more paperwork' without specifying what was involved. Other weaker responses gave answers based on a false assumption that a private limited company would have employees whereas a sole trader wouldn't. Good responses referred to the potential loss of control and the greater reporting requirements of private limited companies.

2c Most candidates gave two valid examples of possible causes of business failure.

2d This question was poorly answered with few candidates demonstrating sound understanding of the consequences for a business of allowing its products to be sold under license by others. Some responses incorrectly discussed the impact of Time 4Tee becoming a franchisee. Relatively few discussed the issues raised in the stem e.g. the impact on quality of allowing franchisees to print their own T-Shirts.

3ai Most candidates gained full marks by offering two valid ways in which the password could be strengthened.

3aii Most candidates gave three valid items of information. A few ignored the instruction in the question and gave 'name'.

3b Most candidates knew that the statement was a reference to the Data Protection Act but not all of these could correctly state the Act's name.

3ci Most candidates had some awareness of potential legal consequences but relatively few explained these sufficiently to achieve full marks.

3cii There were relatively few good responses. Such responses recognised that ethical issues concern rules governing moral behaviour and could give an example of their use. Weaker responses confused ethics with ethnicity or discussed legal issues.

3ciii Most candidates understood that the consequences include an impact of business reputation and sales but relatively few explained fully how the issues in the question would result in such an outcome.

4a Most candidates could give at least two valid differences. Weaker responses either discussed benefits to the use rather than differences, repeated points (something that is small and light will of consequence be portable) or gave incorrect or vague responses.

4b Most gained one or two marks for recognising that carrying out confidential work on portable devices in a public location could result in the loss of both the device and the data it contains.

4c Most recognised that more work could be done but this point was often not developed, e.g. by exploring the impact on total output or the ability of the organisation to complete tasks on schedule.

4d Most candidates were able to recognise one or two valid impacts on the business but there was relatively little evaluation seen.

5a Candidates generally either had accurate knowledge of optical storage devices or used examples of devices from the stem of question 5b.

5b Most candidates correctly identified the two relevant storage devices from the list in the question.

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5ci Few candidates scored good marks on this question. This was partly because there an insufficient understanding of how cloud services operate or there was a mistaken assumption that such services are inherently easy to hack. Candidates who recognised the risks inherent in entrusting data to third parties scored well.

5cii Candidates generally did better on this part, mostly for recognising that the data is being held off-site. Weaker responses assume that the data is inherently safe because it is not physically stored by Time 4Tee.

5di and 5dii Only a relatively small number of candidates gained both marks. Some gave the correct two types of security software but unfortunately the wrong way round.

5e Most candidates were able to recognise valid impacts on the business but there was relatively little analysis seen.

6a Most candidates had some understanding of the role of a cookie in helping to select customised website content but there was limited understanding in most responses of how this is achieved.

6b Most candidates gained one or two marks for recognising the either the legal requirements or the privacy concerns of some internet users.

6c Most answers gave generalised discussion of passwords and gained one or occasionally two marks but there was relatively little discussion of specific security features such as encryption or SSID name hiding.

6d Most responses recognised that the larger discount was a short-term measure and the smaller discount was long-term. However very little analysis of either option was seen.

A266 Developing business and communication systems

General Comments:

This is the seventh assessment for this unit and the marks awarded are about what would be expected. The controlled assessment is aimed at candidates at all levels and the breadth of marks awarded suggests that it was accessible to all candidates.

The number of candidates who chose each of the set tasks was balanced this year and in some cases candidates from the same Centre were seen to be split between both of the Tasks, unlike previous years where whole Centres have chosen to go down the one Task route.

As has been mentioned in the reports from previous years, this is a controlled assessment and Centres should bear in mind that only the work that was completed within the time limit should be submitted. Additional work that was completed as part of the investigation, for example the completed questionnaires, is not required but needs to be used when writing the report itself. There is a recommended word limit of 2000 words for the report; Centres should refer to pages 28 and 29 of the specification for further guidance on this. Centres should also note that any appendices should be relevant and referenced in the appropriate section within the body of the report. There were a number of instances of candidates including bulky appendices that were not referenced in the report.

For scenario 1, many candidates used local coach companies as their resource, with only a small number looking at the larger coach and travel companies that are available countrywide. Candidates still found some difficulty in analysing in detail and justifying their recommendations but there has again been an improvement in this from previous sessions. This has meant that more candidates obtained marks at the top of Band 2 with a larger proportion gaining the higher marks in Band 3. The letter (document) was generally well laid out but candidates still on occasions spent time listing the changes instead of actually trying to sell them to the stakeholders and thus limiting the marks available.

For scenario 2, many candidates were able to use local coffee shops for their resource but there was a large number who chose to use the larger chains for example Costa and Starbucks for their resource. As for task 1, candidates still found some difficulty in analysing in detail and justifying their recommendations but again there is an improvement over the previous sessions. This has meant that more candidates obtained marks at the top of Band 2 with a larger proportion gaining the higher marks in Band 3. The leaflets tended to be bright, colourful and well laid out but again did not always sell the recommendations to the stakeholders. There is also still a tendency for candidates to create posters for this task instead of leaflets which will then limit the marks that are available to them.

In addition centres should bear in mind that the letter is the required document for scenario 1 and the leaflet for scenario 2, some centres got these mixed up and this then limited the marks that were available for their candidates.

Centres completed all of the paperwork accurately and the required samples were generally dispatched quickly. This session showed a vast reduction in the number of centres that had arithmetic and clerical errors on the controlled assessment cover sheets (CCS309), it is good to see that comments on last year's report have been noted. It is always useful to see where Centres have awarded marks on each of the individual piece of coursework and many Centres have adopted the approach of annotating the scripts or including a document that shows where

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the marks have been awarded, it is hoped that this approach will continue to be adopted by all Centres for the future.

For both scenarios, the application of the assessment criteria by individual Centres was generally good. Some Centres, however, did err on the lenient side and award marks in Band 3 when actually the mark should have been Band 2. Centres should bear in mind that to obtain the highest marks the candidate must analyse, assess in detail and justify comprehensively.

For the document (both scenarios 1 and 2), Centres are reminded that in order to obtain the highest mark, the letter or leaflet should be of a near professional quality. It should be virtually error free and be very convincing in communicating the candidate's recommendations, rather than being just a list of recommendations with no obvious attempt at persuading the stakeholders to accept the proposed changes.

A267 ICT skills for business communication systems

General Comments:

Many candidates performed well on the vast majority of this paper. Issues such as candidates running out of time were less apparent than in previous series, and candidates on the whole got all tasks done. The quality of essays for Task B, however, was slightly lower for many candidates this series than has been seen previously.

Candidates generally seemed well prepared for most of the paper, and produced the required evidence, especially for the database task. However, there were still a few issues with some candidates not printing merged letters or just printing one when they were required to print three.

The production of a Notice of Meeting and Agenda on the whole was disappointing. Despite this candidates were able to pick up some marks for this task by communicating some of the information.

The understanding of DTP software varied greatly from centre to centre. Some candidates were able to gain some marks by successfully stating and often describing features of the software. When it came to assessing the benefits and drawbacks of the software for the dance studio many candidates were able to state lots of benefits and drawbacks, although few went on to analyse the impact on the dance studio.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Task 1

(a) (i) – (v) Most candidates gained full marks.

(a) (vi) Many candidates successfully sorted the database, although a few sorted the wrong way or didn't perform a sort at all.

(b) (i) Nearly all candidates were able to create a query; many used the correct criteria.

(b) (ii) The instruction to print the report was omitted from this question in error. All candidates were awarded 2 marks for this question.

(c) Most candidates were able to recall the letter head document on which to write their letter. Many were able to write in the fully blocked style but failed to use open punctuation. The date was often omitted or in an incorrect format. The salutation was mostly included as was the complimentary close, however, a capital S for sincerely often led to marks not being awarded for this sub-section. Many candidates failed to transcribe the correct role of Diana Edwards as The Manager. Most candidates transcribed correct details into the letter, although many did not use an appropriate tone and style in their letter, with most candidates gaining 1 out of 2 marks for tone and style. A small number of candidates did not merge or just produced one copy of the merged letter rather than the required three.

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Task 2

(a) Most candidates successfully produced a Notice of Meeting and Agenda, however, many were not able to successfully recall the fixed items to be included in the correct order. Many were able to gain marks by transcribing the non-fixed items and recalling some fixed items.

(b) (i) Most candidates were able to state and explain features of DTP software. Some candidates answered about the advantages of the software rather than the features.

(b)(ii) Most candidates were able to gain marks here by stating the advantages and disadvantages of DTP software. Few candidates were able to assess the benefits/drawbacks of the software in terms of promoting the dance studio. Where candidates did attempt to do this, they tended to not to develop the point successfully before moving on to another point, and so did not gain the higher level marks.

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