GCE

Applied ICT

Advanced GCE **AS H515/H715**

Advanced Subsidiary GCE **AS H115/H315**

OCR Report to Centres

January 2013

Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations

OCR (Oxford Cambridge and RSA) is a leading UK awarding body, providing a wide range of qualifications to meet the needs of candidates of all ages and abilities. OCR qualifications include AS/A Levels, Diplomas, GCSEs, Cambridge Nationals, Cambridge Technicals, Functional Skills, Key Skills, Entry Level qualifications, NVQs and vocational qualifications in areas such as IT, business, languages, teaching/training, administration and secretarial skills.

It is also responsible for developing new specifications to meet national requirements and the needs of students and teachers. OCR is a not-for-profit organisation; any surplus made is invested back into the establishment to help towards the development of qualifications and support, which keep pace with the changing needs of today's society.

This report on the examination provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding of the specification content, of the operation of the scheme of assessment and of the application of assessment criteria.

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

OCR will not enter into any discussion or correspondence in connection with this report.

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OCR REPORT TO CENTRES

Overview

This is now a stable qualification with the performance in all examined units remaining similar to previous series and with similar issues arising. However, it was disappointing to see so few entries for some units, particularly G054. Where entries have been too small for a general report to be written, centres are advised to look at previous reports to centres and to access the materials on the OCR online training portal (www.ocronlinetraining.org.uk).

Candidates are reminded of the need to apply their answers in Section a of the written papers to the scenario described in the case study. Generic answers to these questions will not allow candidates to access all the marks available. Candidates continue to find it difficult to access the highest marks on all three of the written papers, with responses in section b of most papers continuing to limit the marks that can be awarded. Centres are reminded of the need to teach the concepts covered in the Unit content section of the units, as well as preparing candidates to complete the pre-released tasks.

Generally the quantity and organisation of pre-release work was appropriate. Please ensure that each task is clearly labelled and that the work is submitted in task order. If tasks are not clearly identified, it is difficult for examiners to locate these tasks in order to mark them. Care is also needed when additional answer sheets are used, as these can easily get 'lost' amongst the pages of the pre-release work. Please encourage candidates to indicate on the question paper when they have continued on a separate sheet.

In some cases, Task 1 notes were not submitted with the marked tasks and examination paper by any of the candidates in a centre. If Task 1 is completed and made available in the examination, it must be submitted to the examiner with the examination paper. Candidates who do not complete and have access to Task 1 notes may find themselves at a disadvantage when answering questions in section a of the examination papers. When completing Task 1, candidates need to structure their notes to make them easily accessible in the examination. On some occasions it is apparent that, whilst candidates have made extensive notes, these have not been referred to when answering questions.

Centres are reminded that the work submitted in response to the tasks must be each candidate's own unaided work. It is the centre's responsibility to ensure that the work is carried out in conditions that allow the teacher to confirm this is the case. It should not, for example, be given as homework. Care is needed to ensure that candidates do not share electronic files and that teachers do not provide too much direction when helping candidates to understand what they have to do. Whilst they must not mark the work, deadlines for handing in the work should be set so that there is time for the teacher to check the work before signing the Authentication Statement.

The importance of a fully and accurately completed unit recording sheet on each piece of coursework cannot be over-emphasised. Moderators must be able to match the work to the sample on Moderation Manager, so both the candidate name and correct candidate number should be included. It is also vital that the total mark is indicated, that it correctly totals the individual task marks and that the total on the unit recording sheet and the MS1 (or equivalent) match.

The tendency for candidates to submit excessive amounts of material for moderation was evident again in this series, as has been identified in the report on both the AS and A2 moderated units. This can be counter-productive, especially when the work is not page numbered with the evidence referenced on the unit recording sheet. In such instances, moderators may well be unable to locate evidence in order to confirm the marks. Candidates should be encouraged to be selective in what they submit and only include what is required by the tasks to demonstrate their coverage of the mark bands.

H115/315 GCE Applied ICT (AS units)

General

The number of centres submitting work for moderation this series was somewhat fewer than previous January series. Moderation revealed a range of accuracy in assessment from centres who had taken on board previous feedback, resulting in accurate assessment, to some centres that appeared to be new to the qualification and unfamiliar with its requirements. Such centres are advised to take advantage of the exemplar material available on the OCR website, materials from previous courses that are available on OCR's online training website and coursework consultancy.

Centres are reminded of the need to take care when adding up the individual task marks on the unit recording sheet and when transferring the mark to the MS1 or onto Interchange. The interactive pdf unit recording sheet ensures accurate addition of the task marks but some centres using this still managed to make errors in the transfer of marks. Whilst the moderator will pick this up for those candidates that are sampled, it is not possible to identify them for candidates who are not in the sample.

While most mark sheets and work were received on time. There were a few centres where both mark sheets and work were received very late. In such cases, there is every possibility that candidates' grades may be delayed. To avoid delays in the receipt of coursework, centres should check the moderator's address provided in the request for sample email against the labels provided. If they are different, the address in the email should be used to ensure the work gets to the correct moderator. Centres are reminded that hard copies of the MS1 mark sheet or equivalent must be sent to the moderator, even if marks are submitted electronically. On a positive note, a centre authentication form (CCS160) for each unit was nearly always included either with the mark sheet or with the work.

There continue to be issues with the wrong component code being used when work is being posted to the moderator. Component code 01 should only be used where the centre plans to upload the sampled work onto the OCR Repository; the code for postal submission is 02. Please ensure that you use the correct component code for all future sessions.

Those centres that did upload work to the Repository had followed the guidance given in previous reports, so moderators had little difficulty accessing the evidence and following the assessor's decision making process. However, if hard copies are scanned, care is needed that the scanned image is of an appropriate quality.

Whilst it is acceptable to provide guidance that breaks down the assessment criteria into more candidate-friendly language, care is needed that candidates are not provided with instructions, templates or writing frames that provide more detailed guidance than this. Where the quality of candidates' written communication is being assessed, for example Task a in unit G040, the provision of a template would prevent candidates achieving the highest mark band, which requires a well-structured report, as the structure will have been provided for them. Centres should also take into account section 2 of the JCQ 'Instructions for conducting coursework' when they are providing interim feedback to candidates.

Comments on Individual Units

G040 – Using ICT to communicate

Most of the work seen was appropriate for this level and realistically assessed, although there was some lenient assessment. Candidates need to ensure that they provide appropriate detail in planning, annotations and descriptions, and appropriate depth in explanations and evaluations.

Some of the unit portfolios produced for this unit were very extensive. This can be counterproductive as it becomes difficult for the moderator to locate the required evidence. Draft copies of documents should be carefully selected, labelled and annotated to show development. Two or three drafts should be sufficient. Also, whilst the collection and analysis of existing documents to inform the design of the candidates' documents is good teaching practice, these do not need to be included in the portfolio. However, the documents compared in Task a must be included in the portfolio, so that the moderator can judge the accuracy of the descriptions given.

Task a

This requires candidates to write a formal report which compares two documents from three organisations. It is vital that candidates choose the same two types of document from each organisation and that a comparison between the three similar documents is actually made. Too many candidates described and evaluated each document separately and then provided a very brief comparison at the end. By doing so they often 'ran out of steam', with descriptions of the later documents lacking the detail provided for the first one or two. Candidates should consider discussing all three documents together so that they can identify the similarities and differences as they complete the report. As well as improving comparisons, this would reduce the repetitive nature of the Task and overcome the problem of a document being too good to need improvement, providing others were not. Some care is needed in the choice of documents to compare. For example, business cards or advertisements with limited text do not provide sufficient opportunities for candidates to discuss writing style.

House style should be considered in relation to the two documents from the same organisation, so that similarities of colour, fonts and use of logos can be discussed. There was a tendency for candidates to discuss house style in relation to a single document, where what they were really discussing was consistency. Although more candidates were able to discuss writing style correctly, they often failed to identify the good and bad points of the writing style used in relation to the purpose of each document. Some candidates confuse writing and textual styles.

For mark band 3 candidates need to ensure the reports produced critically analyse the documents and that presentation style, writing style and house style are compared. Critical analysis requires candidates to explain why particular features are good or bad. The explanation should be based on accepted standards wherever possible, rather than just the candidates' own opinions. It is also essential that improvements suggested are relevant, fully justified and related back to the purpose of the document.

Task b

This requires candidates to plan, draft, create and evaluate six original communications. One of the six communications should describe different methods of communication and the technologies which can be used to support them. This must be planned, drafted and evaluated along with the other five. Most candidates did this but there were some that did not. Part of the banner requirement is that the communications produced should be communicated by different methods. Most candidates are producing more than one electronic communication, such as webpages, slide presentations and online forms. Centres may also like to consider interactive pdf forms that can include calculations and be validated.

To achieve beyond mark band 1 of Task bi, candidates need to show evidence of planning for all six communications, with some planning being detailed. They also need to have annotated draft copies to show development. Many candidates provided excellent planning and drafting of some of their communications but their work lacked the consistency required for the mark awarded. Detailed planning should include plans for layout (including component positioning and possibly measurements), details of the font styles, colour schemes and content (text, graphics and other media) to be used, along with a possible source of this content. Draft copies to be annotated should be electronic copies of the complete communication to match the designs. Some candidates misunderstood this requirement and produced and annotated several hand-drawn 'drafts' or provided partially completed stages as drafts. Neither is acceptable evidence. Candidates should annotate each draft to indicate changes that they will make to improve it prior to implementing these changes to produce a further draft or the final copy. Whilst there will inevitably be some evaluation in this process, strengths and weaknesses of the drafts are best discussed in a separate evaluation, rather than by annotation. For mark band 3 communications need to be fully planned and drafted. Planning too frequently lacked the required detail, so that somebody else could make the communication as planned. Annotation of draft documents was poor. Centres are also reminded that drafting is a natural process and should certainly not be manufactured – including versions of communications with words 'accidentally' spelt incorrectly although in previous versions they are not, is not a draft. It was pleasing to see that the bibliographies produced by candidates in more cases than usual included the required detail for marks bands 2 and 3 however some candidates are not including all sources used throughout the work, as required by mark band 2 – a better teaching strategy is to include six bibliographies, one for each communication, so no sources are omitted – rather than one large one at the end. Mark band 3 requires the precise URL of the web page, the date it was accessed, the date it was last updated and the author (if known).

While some very professional communications were seen, others lacked the quality and consistency required for mark band 3 of Task bii. Spelling and grammar errors often remained in the final communications which detracted from their quality. Communications need to be of a consistently high standard with borders and shading used appropriately. Presentations should have simple bullet points and not paragraphs of text in a small font which, on a screen, would be very difficult to read from the back of a room. Documents printed in black and white should have font and background colours chosen carefully to aid viewing. There needs to be some evidence of how information from existing sources has been adapted. This was provided in some portfolios but missing from others. A few selected screen shots showing the original material and the outcome after manipulation is sufficient – for example a picture may have been cropped, re-coloured and merged with other images to create a logo. Prints of the original images and the final logo should provide adequate evidence in this case. Step-by-step guides should **not** be included. Mark band 2 of this task requires that communications are mailable. A letter without such standard content as a date and the recipient's address does not fall into this category.

There was evidence that a range of automated features has been used, including mail merge, auto contents pages/indices and styles, which candidates have created themselves. However, there were occasions when the use was not appropriate, for example a table of contents when the pages were not numbered. To award high marks in this task, in addition to a solid range of graphics and other media, appropriate automation should be used at every opportunity. Overt evidence should be included to prove automation has been used. It should also be noted that some candidates are unsure of what a template is. Templates are the base of a standard communication which can then be populated with content to ensure a consistent style is achieved. It is not, therefore, appropriate for candidates to simply save a final communication with content in it and then claim it is a template, nor is it appropriate to include mail merge fields within a template. A letter template's purpose is to be able to be used to write a letter to anybody about any issue from anybody within the organisation – it cannot be assumed that every letter will be a mail-shot to all customers. A template will contain all the common elements and graphics and then have placeholders prompting the user to add content in the correct position.

Evidence for Task biv is improving with many candidates showing on-going evaluation through reflection on their draft communications as required by mark band 3. Other candidates just provided a description of what they did or only evaluated the final copies and not the drafts. Evaluations should be consistent for all six communications. Evaluation of their own performance was not included by some candidates or it focussed on time management issues. There was also very little on how they would approach a similar task in future in some cases. Centres could encourage candidates to write a final evaluation at the end focusing on how they worked during the whole unit, including the comparison of documents in Task a and what they gained from this task.

In Task bv, a few candidates discussed types of information (written, multimedia, graphical, video, audio and web-based), rather than methods of communication (eg paper-based, screen-based SMS, e-mail). These are included in the second bullet list on page 15 of the Applied ICT specification. This list is now quite extensive and candidates are advised to initially select at least six methods from this list. They should then also explain how the technologies listed at the bottom of page 15 support their chosen communication methods. There was sometimes confusion between methods of communication and technologies, or the technologies were simply identified, rather than described. Some candidates had provided very detailed descriptions of the communication methods but limited the mark that could be awarded by providing little detail about the technologies. The evidence frequently lacked the depth required for mark band 3. Mark band 3 requires candidates to describe at least six of the communication methods listed within the specification and their relative advantages and disadvantages. Technologies utilised should be linked into the method rather than being a separate section. It is worth repeating that evidence for this task must form the content of one of the six communications created with suitable planning, development and evaluation. The detail required is more easily achievable if candidates present the information as a report or newsletter, rather than a slide presentation.

G042 – ICT solutions for individuals and society

The evidence produced for this unit and the accuracy of assessment continues to improve. The majority of centres provided suitable assignments that gave candidates the opportunity to meet all the assessment requirements, with many using or adapting one of the sample assignments available from the OCR website.

Task a

Candidates must make correct use of the advanced search facilities of search engines and construct their own search strings using operators correctly to gain high marks in this task. It is vital that candidates are taught these skills and that they are assessed accurately. The evidence provided and the assessment of this task improved again in this series but there are still instances where candidates are awarded high marks in mark band 2 for advanced searches where the same search terms had been entered into each box, which is unproductive.

While some good use of logical and other operators was seen, some candidates struggled to make correct use of these techniques. Typical errors to be avoided include: using NOT in Google with the first few results including the word which they wanted to omit, not using quotes around phrases, not using spaces properly around + and – operators, entering logical operators in lower case and placing logical operators within quotes. Errors need to be taken into account when awarding marks for this Task as both mark bands 2 and 3 require the techniques to be used correctly. Candidates should be encouraged to check their results to see if their search has worked. Simply checking the results would show if they had use the logical operators correctly.

For high marks within mark band 3, candidates need to use a wide range of operators and other search aides within their own constructed search strings.

Task a also requires candidates to list the information required before they go looking for it, a detailed comparison of search results and a recommendation of which search engine is the best to use for the investigation. Candidates need to ensure they take a logical approach to this task to ensure that evidence is not missed out. Candidates need to start off by listing the information required - this helps them to focus on the investigation and understand exactly what they are looking for. The next step should be to use simple searches and then the advanced search facility of three different engines in an attempt to find some of the information required. In some cases candidates had carried out a large number of simple searches and only refined one or two of them using the advanced search facilities. This is unnecessary. Although the simple searches are important, the emphasis should be on the searches using the advanced search facilities. After a few searches using these facilities have been carried out, it is then expected that a detailed comparison is written which not only compares the number of results yielded but also the quality of the results in terms of the relevance and validity of the information being displayed. It is sensible to suggest that candidates carry out a few identical searches in the different engines to make any comparisons fair. Using a table often aids the comparison. Candidates then need to recommend which search engine they intend to use for the rest of the investigation and why. For higher marks this needs to be in detail and explanations should draw on the results from the searches and the comparisons made. At this point candidates should use Boolean and other search aides, (listed on page 31 of the course specification), within the chosen search engine only, to find all the information required to complete the investigation. These searches should be documented clearly with screen shots showing the terms used and the results.

Task b requires candidates to use large websites to find information for their investigation. Candidates must start off by listing what information is required, as it is otherwise difficult to determine whether the information found demonstrably meets their needs, as required by mark band 3. Most had done so, although not always in sufficient detail. It is expected that the online database used is separate from the large website. Candidates need to provide overt evidence of using menus and other navigational aides, rather than concentrating on the use of internal searches. Also, some simple searches using an internal search facility is expected to be included for mark band 2. Many candidates had provided evidence of a range of complex searches of one or more online databases using an advanced search facility to find the information they had identified. Candidates should use an online database that provides an advanced search facility, rather than attempting to use logical operators in a simple search box – they rarely work.

Most candidates had been provided with a suitable local database to interrogate for Task c – a range of suitable databases for most of the commonly used assignments can be found on the OCR social community. In most cases a good range of operators had been used in searches but reports were not always well-presented. Reports produced should be customised so they present data clearly and neatly – they need to have the correct page orientation for the data being displayed, meaningful titles and ensure fields are wide enough for the data to be fully displayed. It should be clear exactly what the report shows without reference to any other material. It is also expected that reports are printed or, if work is being submitted electronically, output to a portable document file for both mark bands 2 and 3 of this task. Candidates must provide screen print evidence of their queries in design view. However, it is not necessary to include a step by step guide to how they built their queries or, indeed, how they created and edited their reports.

Some well-designed spreadsheets were seen for Task d that made good use of complex formulae and functions and used well constructed macros to speed up the input of data and the production of results. Other spreadsheets were too simple for this level of qualification with macros mainly used for navigation. The Amplification of Criteria on page 158 of the specification suggests the types of formulae and functions expected for mark bands 2 and 3. Macros should replace more than one action to be of value. Creating a macro to print a whole sheet is fairly pointless, as the user would only need to click the print button on the toolbar, but creating a macro to print a selected area of the sheet would reduce the number of actions required.

It was not always possible to determine whether the spreadsheet was well-designed, as candidates had produced a report on the production of the spreadsheet, with cropped screen shots of the relevant areas of the spreadsheet or the functions used. Such detailed documentation is not required. Candidates should provide printouts or screen prints of each sheet in both value and formula view and only describe and evidence those features that are not obvious from these printouts. However, these printouts must be large enough for the contents to be read. Some very thorough testing tables were seen that covered all aspects of the spreadsheet but not all candidates went on to provide evidence that the testing had been carried out, other than a comment in the table. Candidates should provide screen print evidence to show that the tests have been carried out. Other candidates based their testing on whether the macros worked, rather than the accuracy of results produced by formulae. A simple way of illustrating that formulae work would be to replace the data found with dummy data, i.e. 1s, 2s or 10s, so that it can be easily seen that the formulae work as intended. Alternatively, candidates can do some manual calculations, showing their working out, using the actual data. Where charts are produced, these must have suitable titles and labels.

Although most candidates now understand that the emphasis of Task e is to report on the findings of their investigation, a few just provided a description of what they did, rather than what they found out. Mark band 3 requires candidates to produce a well-structured presentation of their results that effectively combines at least five types of information from at least five different sources. The term 'presentation' is used in its widest sense and candidates might find it easier to provide the coherence and quality required by this mark band if they presented the information in a report or newsletter, rather than a slide presentation. As far as possible, candidates should import or copy and paste data from spreadsheets, web pages and other sources into their presentation. It is not sufficient to simply include screen prints. It is the ability to combine different types of information that is being tested. If all the information is included as screen prints, candidates are effectively only combining text and graphics. Some candidates forgot the design and presentation principles learnt in G040 and included far too much information on each slide of a presentation. Candidates must list their sources to be awarded marks in this Task and this list should be an integral part of the presentation. A few had failed to list their sources. Mark band 3 requires a detailed bibliography, which requires the same information included as in Task bi of unit G040. In Task f candidates need to comment on the way in which they refined the presentation of results. The inclusion of an annotated draft of the 'presentation' with relevant reflective annotation would be helpful to secure marks for the evaluation task.

Task f requires candidates to evaluate the methods used to search for and present information. This was evidenced well by some candidates but others provided a Task by Task evaluation or focused only on search methods rather than the techniques used to both search and present the results. Ongoing reflection is required for mark band 3 and, although this was present in some cases for searching, candidates often forgot to evaluate over time how they were presenting what they had found. Although presenting results mainly refers to Task e, candidates could also gain marks for evaluating how they adjusted the reports made in Task c to suit their purpose better and how, in Task d, they adjusted the charts they had automatically generated with a wizard, so the information displayed was easier to understand. Care is needed that candidates actually evaluate the methods used, rather than simply describing what they did.

Task g requires candidates to discuss the impact of the availability of electronic information. There was a tendency for candidate to either focus on generic benefits of the internet or on how their friends and family use it, rather than considering the impacts. Others discussed the impact of the increased availability of ICT and technology in general, rather than focussing on electronic information. For mark band 2, candidates need to research the issues related to electronic information being available outside their daily life.
At the very least, this may include looking for a house to buy and how electronic information has sped this process up, although for higher marks wider issues should be considered such as early warning systems and political restrictions. Page 159 of the specification suggests other aspects that could be covered.

Mark band 3, in addition, requires candidates to consider what the impact of organisations communicating electronically has on society. This should relate to the use of websites, email, text messages and other electronic methods that organisations now use to communicate with society as a whole and individuals within it, rather than the use of electronic communication within a business or for business to business communication. They also need to analyse the consequences for people who do not have or do not want access to electronic information. Too often candidates were able to identify who these people were without considering the impact this lack of access might have. Centres are reminded that the quality of written communication is assessed through this Task and that they need to adjust marks to take account of errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar.

G043 – G047

There were too few entries for these units to make generic comments. Centres should refer to previous reports to centres, in particular for June 2012, for guidance on these units. OCR's online training portal also has training materials for these units that centres can download.

G041 How Organisations Use ICT

General Comments

There was a wide range of marks this series from candidates who scored 80+ to some who gained very few marks across the whole paper. Candidates generally scored well on Task 2 and much of Section a but Task 3 and questions in Section b were less well attempted.

Most candidates attempted all of the questions but some lost marks because they did not apply their responses to the question set – not reading/not understanding the question/not giving the type of response required. This was particularly the case in Task 3, where responses did not always fully address the task set. The skill of picking out the key points required is something that needs to be taught, as is using the number of marks available as a guide to the number of points they should make.

Centres are encouraged to use the What You Need to Learn section of the unit, as well as previous Examiner Reports, question papers and mark schemes when preparing candidates for the examination. Candidates should also be taught examination techniques to help them provide appropriate answers to the questions. The topics in the Unit Content section of the specification must be taught before candidates sit the examination. Questions in Section b can ask about any of the topics covered. Too many responses to the questions in this section suggested that insufficient emphasis had been placed on teaching the content of the specification for this unit.

Most pre-prepared work was word processed and most candidates had clearly labelled Tasks 2 and 3. There was a great variety in the standard of Task 1 work attached. Some candidates included huge amounts of text for their Task 1 notes, which was not useful to them in the exam. Candidates should be encouraged to keep to the point in their notes so that they are able to refer to them for their answers in the exam. Some candidates did not include Task 1 notes in their pre-release work. Centres are reminded that, if these are taken into the examination, they must be attached to the paper and submitted to the examiner. If candidates fail to complete Task 1, they are putting themselves at a disadvantage, as they are unlikely to have the detailed knowledge of the case study required to answer Section a questions successfully.

All reports for Task 3 were word-processed as required. Hand-drawn diagrams are acceptable for Task 2 and candidates may benefit from at least hand-labelling the information flows, as marks were sometimes lost due to candidates' inability to manipulate text boxes. However, hand-drawn diagrams should be clearly laid out with candidates making use of a ruler to draw boxes and arrows. Where candidates use colour to link a label to the relevant arrow, they should ensure that the colours chosen are visible and distinguishable. It is not necessary to use a different shade for every arrow, as long as those labels that could be ambiguous are in different colours.

The work taken into the examination must only include the candidates' responses to the tasks set. The requirements of Task 1 change from year to year, so centres need to ensure that the task is read carefully and responded to appropriately. For example, legislation is not part of the Task 1 requirements in this series. Teachers need to set deadlines for completion of the tasks so that they have sufficient time to check (but not mark) the work carefully prior to the examination.

In addition to checking for material not related to the tasks, centres are reminded of the need to check the work carefully for authenticity before signing the Centre Authentication Form. Candidates should be warned that it is very obvious when they share diagrams for Task 2, even if they make changes to the formatting, or share files for Task 3, even if they change the order of the points/paragraphs. While most candidates included the required list of sources, some still failed to do so. Also, quoting the website used in their list of sources does not excuse copying and pasting significant sections into their report.

A Centre Authentication Form **must** be included with the scripts. If no Centre Authentication Form is received, candidates will not receive their results. The candidate authentication forms, however, should **not** be submitted. These should be retained securely in the centre until final results are published.

Care is needed to ensure that candidates are not given too much guidance when carrying out the tasks. Whilst it is acceptable for teachers to ensure that candidates understand the content of the case study and the requirements of the tasks, they should not give help that relates directly to carrying out each task. Too often, the diagrams created for Task 2 and the topics addressed in Task 3 were similar for all candidates within a Centre.

If candidates use a supplementary sheet because they run out of space for their answers, they **must** indicate to the Examiner that they have done so. Such sheets easily get mixed in with the pre-released tasks and may be overlooked, possibly losing candidates a significant number of marks.

Comments on individual Questions

Task 2

This task was well attempted by most candidates, with suitable diagrams produced, although a few inappropriate diagrams were seen. Centres should look at the diagram provided in the mark scheme as a guide to the type of diagram required. Most candidates gained full marks for the senders/receivers of information but the labelling of the information flows was sometimes imprecise. When candidates did not gain full marks it was usually because they had described processes or labelled arrows ambiguously.

Care is needed that the information and method for each information flow is identified, rather than described. Where candidates describe the information flow, they often include other processes and lose marks as a result. Some candidates wrote a whole sentence from the case study on each arrow, rather than picking out the information and method from it. Candidates should be advised against this. They need to be taught to use nouns, rather than verbs, when identifying the information and method. Candidates should get into the habit of writing 'final decision – face-to-face', 'quotation – post' and so on. They are then less likely to fall into the habit of describing processes.

Care is needed that information flows are labelled unambiguously. Marks can only be awarded if it is clear to which flow a label refers. Candidates may find it easier to label the flows by hand, rather than manipulating text boxes. However, the points made above about hand-drawn diagrams need to be considered and candidates need to ensure that the labels are legible.

Two or more information flows between the same two people must be represented by separate arrows, each unambiguously labelled. Candidates should also be prepared to move the senders and receivers around when they are producing their diagram so that it is possible to draw an arrow directly from one to another without crossing other arrows or needing to change direction.

Candidates must ensure that their diagram only includes what is required in the task. The task stated that the process starts when the salesperson arrives at the customer's house for the appointment and ends when the customer is ready to confirm the order. Candidates did not, therefore, need to include the Head Office as an entity in the diagram, nor did they need to include information flows related to arranging the appointment. Such additions were not penalised but, where candidates included the whole process from arranging the appointment to the blinds being fitted and paid for, this was deemed too vague for credit.

Task 3

Candidates must ensure that they actually address the task set. The task required candidates to explain the implications of complying with the DPA for the company. While abiding by the eight principles of the DPA would be part of the implications for Progress Blinds, an explanation of these principles should not have been the focus of the report, even if the explanation had been applied to the case study. As well as considering other implications, candidates needed to evaluate the impacts on the staff and customers of the company having to comply with the legislation. This was often not addressed or limited to positive impacts. Where candidates are asked to evaluate, they need to include both benefits and limitations. For high marks, the evaluation needs to be balanced and thoroughly applied to the case study.

Centres should advise candidates that the quality of their written communication is important and assessed in this task. Candidates must **correctly** proof read their work to prevent spelling errors and ensure that the grammar and punctuation is appropriate and that the content is clearly expressed.

Candidates who provided an evaluation of their performance gained most, if not all, the marks available for this section. Others failed to access these marks by not attempting an evaluation. The evaluation should be of the methods used to carry out the research to produce the report, rather than its structure. Candidates need to be more specific in their evaluations, rather than simply providing generic statements such as ‘I used the internet’.

Question 1

Candidates must give the function ‘administration’ rather than the job title of the person carrying out the function ‘administration assistant’. However, candidates who wrote the latter were able to access the remainder of the marks and most did so successfully. Candidates must ensure they read the question fully before attempting to answer it. The question specifically related to the showroom, so answers relating to other parts of the company failed to gain marks.

Question 2

Candidates needed to use the whole case study to gain high marks in this question, rather than simply relying on the brief overview of the Branch Manager’s role given on the first page. Weaker candidates tended to gain two or three marks from this initial overview, while more able candidates looked elsewhere and were able to gain four or five marks.

Question 3

Most candidates were able to identify that the other type of customers were companies, with many also able to describe the process for ordering blinds. Some candidates needed to recognise that the process differed from that for individual customers from the general public.

Question 4

The majority of candidates were able to correctly identify two input methods and matching items of information. Some candidates needed to recognise that the items of information needed to relate to products.

Many candidates were able to access some of the marks for part b of the question. In order to gain full marks, all the calculations involved needed to be described. Candidates were asked to describe only calculations, so the inputting of the data and processing, such as looking up prices, should not have been considered. The question specifically applied to one blind to be fitted outside the recess, so there was no need to include subtracting 1 cm from both dimensions or adding an additional row on the data input form for an additional blind. Candidates needed to start the description when dimensions were divided by 100 and multiplied together and end when the deposit was deducted. Candidates also needed to indicate that VAT was calculated and added.

Question 5

Many candidates recognised that the salesperson used a tablet computer with inbuilt camera/3G connectivity but failed to read the question to the end to recognise that creating a quotation was not to be included in their response. Those that had fully read the question were able to gain full or nearly full marks. In part (ii) candidates needed to be specific in their naming of the software, ie a bespoke graphics package. When answering this type of question, candidates need to be able to differentiate between software, input data, processing and output. They will not gain marks if descriptions are in the wrong section.

Question 6

In part a, candidates needed to describe facilities the website could offer other than e-commerce. While many candidates could explain at least one suitable facility, such as providing the bespoke graphics software online or allowing customers to book appointments online, it was clear that many either did not understand the term e-commerce or had not read the question carefully, as they gave answers relating to ordering blinds.

Part b of this question differentiated well. More able candidates were able to provide a detailed and balanced discussion that included both benefits and limitations of the company introducing e-commerce in equal measure, while weaker candidates gave generic answers that included limited detail of either benefits or limitations.

Question 7

There was some confusion in this question between computer aided manufacture (CAM) and robots. Although most candidates were able to gain some marks in part a of the question, answers needed to be more specific and applied to Progress Blinds. In part b, candidates needed to recognise that the impacts required were those on employees, not a continuation of part a. Candidates also need to realise that the introduction of CAM or any other automated system does not guarantee job losses.

Question 8

Candidates were better able to describe the role of the Design and Development department than they were the Research department, although some care was needed that they did not simply copy the terms in the title with little application. Candidates need to be taught the roles of different departments, such as these, so that they can apply their knowledge to scenarios such as the one given in this question. Many answers appeared to come from candidates' general knowledge or interpretation of the scenario than specific knowledge of the given roles. Most answers for (i) equated to market research, rather than other research activities, while many gave creating prototypes as an answer to part (ii). The link between the two departments was also recognised by some candidates.

While some candidates recognised that the manufacturer would need details of dimensions and materials from the design process, there was a lack of precision as to how these details would be supplied.

Candidates must be made aware that legislation does not stop or prevent designs being copied; it just makes this illegal.

Question 9

(a) Most candidates were able to describe one difference between the internet and an intranet, most usually related to access, but found the second difference more challenging.

(b) Candidates needed to be able to differentiate between the use of an intranet and simply accessing files from a central file server over a network. Whilst some candidates were able to suggest suitable ways an intranet could be used by an organisation, few mentioned a standard interface or were able to explain the method suggested.

(c) Many candidates showed a lack of understanding by indicating that the fact that customers could not access the intranet was a disadvantage. Some candidates did recognise that an intranet would need to be maintained, although mostly in terms of cost, rather than the need to keep the information up-to-date.

G048 Working to a brief

General Comments

There was a very much reduced cohort during this session. Centres are reminded that candidates MUST complete a Task from the current list. Where candidates are re-sitting this unit, work submitted for the 2011 – 2012 task list is not acceptable.

Overall, work was of a similar quality to that seen in recent series'.

Across all candidates, a variety of diary styles and structures have been used, and, in the best cases, these structures really do aid candidates when it comes to completing this task.

Comments on Individual Questions

Task a

The vast majority of candidates create a report which focuses on the structure and content of resources that are similar to their intended solution. For example, where candidates need to create a website, they will look at current existing websites that carry out similar tasks. Where this practice is followed, this report will result in a mark from MB2 being awarded, as this only concentrates on one aspect of the required report. In the best cases, candidates then go on to look at more theoretical aspects - such as how persuasive writing may be used to help a website sell. In doing so, candidates are therefore looking at real world examples and discussing whether or not these examples are carrying out their function effectively. Clearly, from such a discussion, candidates are able to then identify a full range of issues of which account need be taken.

In a few cases, candidates have written a report in to the current structure and management of the organisation on which the task has been set. This focus does not allow candidates to draw conclusions about the structure and content of their intended solution and should be avoided, as such work is unlikely to achieve beyond MB1 for this task.

Task b (i)

Many candidates continue to include one formal planning technique (usually a Gantt) and ignore the request for a second. As a result, marks are restricted to MB2 for this task.

Task b (ii)

The quality of planning across all centres has improved over the lifetime of this qualification. However, there remains a surprisingly large number of candidates who plan Unit 9 (G048) rather than the task. Therefore, their plan will include time to complete the Current Working Practice report, as well as creating the Gantt itself. This is the wrong focus of this Task and should be avoided. The planning should concentrate on the creation of the solution to the brief and should cover the period from the completion of the current working practice research (by which stage candidates should have a clear idea of their overall task) through to the completion of the Support Materials.

In order to move up through the mark bands, candidates need to include some clear information on what they intend to do.
For example, when creating a document for publication, candidates wishing to achieve a mark from MB3 should plan to create both the individual pages, as well as the elements on those pages. In order to achieve this degree of detail, many centres are now asking candidates to

create one over arching plan, that covers all tasks in little detail, but then create sub-plans that cover distinct periods during the creation.

Task c (i)

Many candidates now include good evidence of the use of initiative to gather relevant ICT skills and fully justify a mark from MB3.

Task c (ii)

The majority of candidates now achieve a mark from MB2 by including evidence of both the use of formal techniques - usually a meeting (evidenced by a description in the diary and/or minutes) - as well as evidence that they are aware of the need for high quality work. Such evidence can include simple statements about the need for work to be completed on time and to a fair standard. However, marks from MB3 are not as frequent. In order to access this mark band, candidates must give clear evidence that they are fully aware of the need to complete high quality work. Evidence for this would be repeated comments about a wide range of issues.

Task c (iii)

This task represents the greatest improvement in performance over the last few sessions. Candidates are now more aware of the very different needs of MB1, MB2 and MB3. However, there is still room for some improvement here. In order to justify marks from MB2, candidates must justify the actions they have taken in response to more complex issues. In some cases, this is implied in the issue itself, but, in order to make this point clearly, candidates are advised to include a clear statement about why they took the action they did. In most cases, this will be a simple comment, but the inclusion of this does make the point very clearly. In order to achieve MB3, candidates must also include clear evidence that they are aware of the cause of the problem and have taken action to avoid its repetition.

Task d

Many candidates are now producing really good support materials that show good application of skills from across this and other units in the qualification.

Tasks e and f

There has been some real improvement in this task of late, but, in many cases, candidates are not including sufficient range in either report to justify a mark from MB3. For the planning report, the report should not solely focus on the efficacy of using Gantt or CPA charts, but should consider the whole range of tasks that have contributed to the planning process. This can include aspects of how the focus of the Current Working Practice report was decided upon, as well as how this then led to the identification of tasks and the order in which they should be completed. Coupled with this, candidates could then include a discussion of how they identified how long each individual task should take to be completed. This in itself could be a large section, and may include some discussion of guess work, as well as the use of advice from third parties. Clearly, such a report would allow candidates to include a great deal of analysis and evaluation, thereby fully justifying a mark from MB3 for this task.

Similarly, for Task f, there is a wide range of areas that could be considered. Typically, candidates concentrate on the creation of the actual product, and comment on how well they used the software. However, in terms of the application of the plan, candidates are working to create a product that fits the brief set and further extended by the client. As a result, the interaction between the candidate and the client is of great importance when creating the product. This area of consideration is often ignored.

Task g

This has been another area of development over the past three sessions. Candidates are now routinely including feedback from others - both client and user - in order to come to conclusions about their product. However, in a few cases, candidates are merely presenting this information, without any commentary or interpretation. As a result, this aspect has had to be ignored.

H515/715 GCE Applied ICT (A2 units)

Introduction

The introduction to the report for the A2 units should be read in conjunction with the introduction to the AS reports as many, if not all, of the issues are common.

Some centres provided clear details of their assessment decisions. All portfolios should have a fully completed Unit Recording Sheet (URS) with a comment to explain the marks awarded for each task. Page numbers should be completed on the URS.
Although annotation of candidate work is not essential, it's appropriate use is very helpful and is an example of best practice.

On the OCR Repository some centres organised the evidence in an effective manner such as a separate file for each task with the filename indicating which task(s) the file related to. Regrettably this was not the case for some centres.

The volume of evidence presented by some candidates was considered to be excessive. On the whole, portfolios produced by candidates that focused on the evidence required frequently scored better when assessed by the teacher. Surplus evidence is more difficult for teachers to assess and moderators to moderate.

Centres are reminded of the importance of meeting the deadlines for the submission of marks to Moderator and the Board as well as the requirements to send the sample of coursework requested within the timeframe specified in the correspondence. The majority of centres this session met the deadlines.

Centres need to take care with administration for this qualification. There are two component codes, one for OCR Repository entries and one for Postal moderation entries. A number of centres made Repository entries when they intended to make postal moderation entries.

A number of centres made careless mistakes with marks resulting in amendments to marks submitted. This slows down the moderation process and centres risk delays to the issue of results while these issues are resolved.

Unit G049 Numerical modelling Using spreadsheets

More centres correctly identified that the emphasis of this unit is on numerical modelling rather than data manipulation, as has been fed back in previous reports for this unit. It is pleasing to note that the proportion of centres failing to focus on numerical modelling was lower than in previous sessions. The problem that the candidates attempted to solve, in many cases, provided the opportunity for significant numerical processing with a small number of centres focussing on spreadsheet tasks with little numerical modelling. Using a spreadsheet to simply store and present information, for example database type solutions that involve little or no data processing are not suitable for this unit as candidates are unlikely to be able to access the marks relating to numerical modelling in the various tasks.

The design specifications produced by many candidates were detailed while in other instances they lacked the necessary detail. At the simplest level, design specifications must incorporate consideration of user requirements, data sources, processing to be carried out and output to be generated, although data sources were sometimes overlooked or mentioned very briefly. More able candidates incorporated ideas for screen layouts, identification of spreadsheet layout, spreadsheet facilities to be utilised and considered how the numerical processing aspects of the solution met the user requirements.

Candidates achieving high marks for Task a produced a specification that was detailed enough to enable a competent third party to implement it independently.

The solution implemented in Task b(i) and Task b(ii) by some candidates showed clear evidence of the use of complex spreadsheet facilities, as listed on page 63 of the unit specification, as well as clear evidence of a range of spreadsheet functions appropriate to the solution of the problem. Some centres correctly recognised that functions such as lookup functions were part of the common built-in spreadsheet functions and not specialised built-in functions and the candidate was, correctly, restricted to marks in the lower mark bands. Annotation of printouts or a commentary detailing the spreadsheet solution provided clear evidence of the use of the spreadsheet facilities and functions. This in turn provided evidence towards Task c, the strategy for implementing the solution. Where no clear evidence could be found, often due to lack of annotation, marks were adjusted downwards as the moderator could not easily locate the use of the functions within the spreadsheet solution.

For Task c, the evidence presented often detailed the problems encountered by the candidate whilst developing the spreadsheet solution and how these were surmounted, allowing the candidate to access the marks for this task. The teacher may have been aware of some of these problems over the period of time that the portfolio was generated and encouraged candidates to include the evidence within the portfolio to support the marks awarded; product evidence must be included and not just a teacher statement.

Testing the spreadsheet solution, in Task d, was carried out well by a small proportion of candidates, but evidence was generally better than in previous sessions. Such portfolios included clear evidence of planning the testing to be performed and addressed testing functionality with the use of normal, abnormal and boundary data.

The technical and user documentation produced for Task e need to be separate documents as they are for different readers; this was correctly presented by the majority of candidates. The technical documentation usually provided sufficient details to allow somebody to maintain or amend the spreadsheet structure. In a small number of cases the documentation provided would not allow this to happen.

A small number of candidates performed well in mark band 3 in Task f. In some cases the evaluation was descriptive rather than critical, restricting marks that should have been awarded. Candidates that performed well ensured that the evaluation referred back to the initial requirements of the problem and, in order to access the higher mark bands, considered feedback from users and related the evaluation to the design specification.

G050 Interactive multimedia products

In the vast majority of evidence seen, candidates are using software that allows candidates to produce appropriate evidence for this unit. Page 69 of the specification indicates the types of interaction that could be incorporated into the final product. Not all multimedia software will facilitate the majority of these. It was noticeable this session that more centres appeared to use more appropriate software for the production of the interactive multimedia product ie software that allowed the candidate the opportunity to incorporate a variety of interaction within the final product. Evidence for Task e often was of a higher quality than in previous sessions.

To access the higher marks in Task a, candidates evaluated the commercial multimedia products, rather than described them; some teachers awarded mark band 3 for descriptions rather than evaluations. There must also be a detailed explanation of how the product influenced the design of the product that the candidates produce. Some candidates produced evaluations that were descriptive in nature rather than a critical analysis of the products; this restricted the marks awarded to a maximum of mark band 2.

For Task b (i) some candidates produced plans for completely different products; the requirement is to produce different designs for the same product. Content must be considered as part of the plan to access higher marks; some plans seen in this session, as in previous sessions, contained very little indication of content. Some candidates that had been awarded mark band 3 had produced detailed designs, as required.

Task b (ii) required a critical analysis of the designs in order to access higher mark points, not just a description of the designs. Good and bad points of each design need to be identified and a reasoned argument presented to explain why the final design was chosen by the candidate and how it met the needs of the client. Again, an analysis that was not critical in nature restricted marks awarded to a maximum of mark band 2.

Task c (i) and Task c (ii) require evidence of the use of a variety of ICT skills to produce a multimedia solution. The nature of these skills is identified on page 69 of the unit specification. Many candidates failed to identify how they had used their initiative to develop and extend their ICT skills to create a variety of elements to be used in the product. Candidates could annotate their evidence to explain how the skills have been used and how the skills are aiding the development of the multimedia product. Task c (iii) required the candidate to bring together the various components into a complete solution. This is where the nature of the multimedia software may restrict the nature of the product developed. A small number of centres continue to allow candidates to create products that are mainly text and image based with little or no interaction.

The testing of the product for Task d was carried out to a high standard by a minority of centres. The candidates needed to test not just the functionality of the product, but the fact that the product met the requirements of the design specification.

Task e required candidates to incorporate installation instructions as part of the user guide for the product; the quality of evidence varied from centre to centre. Candidates are encouraged to incorporate images within their user guide in order to clarify the steps within it. The user guide needs to include details of the system specification for the product and details of how to install the product. Some candidates omitted an explanation of what the purpose of the multimedia presentation was.

For Task f some candidates critically analysed their solution in order to access the higher mark points. More able candidates provided evidence of obtaining feedback from users that tested the product, as well as providing clear evidence of linking the product to the design specification. Evidence for this task must also incorporate a critical analysis of the candidate's own performance to secure mark band 3.

G051 Publishing

It is important that candidates address all parts of the unit rather than concentrating on the production of the CRC document; some candidates did not sufficiently document the processes involved.

The evidence of the meeting(s) with clients varied greatly in evidence presented for Task a. Some candidates could not access real clients so the teacher, or other suitable person, acted as the client; this is acceptable. It is important that interim and final deadline dates are considered to move beyond mark band 1. In some instances the record(s) of the meeting(s) provided little insight to what was discussed at the meetings.

It is a requirement of mark band 3 in Task b (i) that candidates explore different means of presenting the same information and use a comprehensive range of editing and manipulation tools. Some candidates were awarded marks in mark band 3 when there was no evidence to support this. Some candidates explored a range of editing and manipulation tools but did not demonstrate these on the same piece(s) of material and therefore candidates found it difficult to draw any conclusions from the tools used.

Evidence for Task b (ii) and b (iii) sometimes showed clear evidence of the design stage processes. To access marks in mark band 2 in Task b (ii) there must be explicit evidence to include the following:

- sketching different initial document designs;
- following housestyle;
- creating master page layouts;
- presenting page proofs;
- producing artwork sketches;
- setting text orientation;
- creating style sheets.

For Task b (iii) annotation of evidence generated enabled candidates to access mark band 2, whereas an accompanying explanation enabled candidates to access mark band 3. Many centres awarded marks based on the final product when the candidate had included little or no explanation of the design stages followed and how this enabled the production of the product. Production of the product does not imply any understanding of the process and overt evidence is required.

Higher marks in Task c (i) were awarded where clear evidence of using styles and attributes to produce a publishable version of the agreed design were included. The work of some candidates did not match the agreed design. Candidates are required to evidence editing a piece of imported text. This is best evidenced through careful annotation of the evidence as the evidence should be explicit rather than implicit. Candidates accessing the higher mark points sometimes demonstrated a clear understanding of the design stage processes. A number of centres gave high marks in Task c (i) when the candidate had made use of WordArt; at this level, candidates should be using style sheets to control the appearance of the publication and the presence of WordArt in a publication suggests that the candidate has limited understanding of the design stage processes. Many candidates had made simple errors in their publications and these had not been identified by the assessor; for example, a contents page with page numbers for the sections of the document, yet the pages of the publication did not include page numbers.

The letter produced for Task c (ii) lacked detail in the work of some candidates. The unit specification identifies the required content of the letter.

Tasks d (i) and d (ii) require analysis of the CRC and how the solution was refined to meet the client's needs as well as an analysis of the candidate's performance. Candidates in mark band 3 sometimes produced a critical analysis, as required. There will be an evaluation, not a description, of the candidate's role in the development of the solution for higher marks.

G052 Artwork and imaging

Some candidates produced a high quality portfolio of artwork as required for the higher marks in Task a and ensured that an appropriate product was created for the client.

The number of entries received for this unit in this session were too small to produce any general feedback. Centres preparing candidates for moderation in Summer 2013 are advised to read the report to centres issued for Summer 2012.

G053 Developing and creating websites

This unit remains the most popular unit in the A2 specification.

For Task a, candidates must explain the reasons for choosing, or not choosing, features in web pages examined to be awarded mark band 2, a few did not. In order to access mark band 3, there must be a critical analysis of the web pages examined; a number of candidates had achieved this. Frequently, the evidence provided was solely a description of the web pages visited, meeting mark band 1 requirements.

In Task b, candidates were required to identify domain names suitable for the site and, in order to access higher mark points, explain the reason for this name and provide alternative options. It was pleasing to see that a number of candidates had actually uploaded the site designed, although this is not necessary. Task b also required structure diagrams, a story board, an index of pages and a task list/action plan. Frequently some of these components were missing from the candidate work; the most common omission was the index of pages in the website. Only some candidates had sufficiently analysed the website to be produced. In some instances the index of pages was produced from the software after the website was created; this is not appropriate.

In Task c, to secure mark band 3, a full explanation is required to explain the design techniques, hyperlinks, multimedia and interactive features used; a small number of candidates had evidenced this.

Evidence of understanding HTML script in Task d was implicit in the work of some candidates rather than explicit. For mark band 2 candidates were required to edit script commands. Evidence to support this could include a before and after screen shot of the implications of the changes as well a narrative to describe the changes; this was provided by many candidates. Mark band 3 requires evidence of adding script commands to include at least two from graphic, table or hyperlink. A number of candidates concentrated on embedding scripting language code, such as JavaScript, rather than editing and adding HTML script. The use of JavaScript contributes to Task c and not Task d. This has been contained within reports for previous sessions, yet some centres have failed to address this issue.

In Task e most candidates ensured that the website met the design specification; explicit evidence of this is required. It is useful if candidates include before and after screenshots if changes are required to the website as a result of testing.

Task f required candidates to produce a critical analysis of their website in order to gain higher marks. An analysis of the candidate's own performance was also required. In many cases the evidence was a description of what they had undertaken, rather than a critical analysis, meeting the requirements of mark band 2 rather than mark band 3.

Unit G056 Program design, production and testing

No entries were received for this unit this session. Centres preparing candidates for moderation in Summer 2013 are advised to read the report to centres issued for Summer 2012.

G057 Database design

No entries were received for this unit this session. Centres preparing candidates for moderation in Summer 2013 are advised to read the report to centres issued for Summer 2012.

G058 Developing and maintaining ICT systems for users

No entries were received for this unit this session. Centres preparing candidates for moderation in Summer 2013 are advised to read the report to centres issued for Summer 2012.

G059 ICT Solutions for people with individual needs

The number of entries received for this unit in this session were too small to produce any detailed feedback. Centres preparing candidates for moderation in Summer 2013 are advised to read the report to centres issued for Summer 2012.

H715 GCE Applied ICT (G055)

Tasks

Tasks were generally presented in a logical order, were easily identifiable and were of good quality. There was a lack of understanding of the case study demonstrated in the answers presented in Section a. During the preparation of Task 1, candidates should ensure that they have fully understood all parts of the case study. It appeared that candidates had not understood what it means to be 'freelance' and answers often referred to the Freelance Designers as if they were part of one company.

Task 2

This Task consisted of three sub-tasks:

Table of interconnecting devices

This part was answered well with most candidates identifying three separate connection devices. Most candidates gained only one mark for an explanation of why the device was needed as they were only able to explain the general purpose of the device and not its purpose within the OGD network.

Physical topology diagram

Candidates were generally able to show the identified connection devices on the diagram and showed how these were connected to the network. Common mistakes were wireless access points with no physical connection to the network and routers that were not obviously connected to a network device or an internet connection. Candidates should be aware that the tasks are linked and that a device shown in the table must appear on the diagram.

Evaluation of methods used

Candidates here need to be aware that the evaluation is of the way they completed Task 2 and not their solution to Task 2. Common answers included use of the internet and books and any candidate who evaluated methods rather than solutions gained some marks.

Task 3

This task was generally answered well. Candidates who gained marks in the highest band did so because they had explained VPN functionality and related its use to the Graphic Designers. Many answers were limited to a description of VPN and there was often little attempt to relate its use to this particular scenario.

Question Paper

Section a

1) This question was answered well by many candidates. A common mistake was to describe a general advantage and disadvantage of having a network.

2) This question was poorly answered.The question referred to the Freelance Designers. Some candidates appeared to misunderstand the meaning of ‘Freelance’ and answers were general or referred to sharing data. Candidates should be encouraged, while working on Task 1, to check their understanding of all parts of the case study.

3) This question was quite poorly answered.

(a) Although most candidates were able to draw a star topology many did not use the diagram to represent the whole network at OGD and consequently failed to gain most of the marks.

(b) Most candidates gained one mark. The second mark was often missed as the candidate’s answer was too vague.

4) This question was answered well by a majority of candidates.

5) This question was also answered well by a majority of candidates.

6) Candidates were generally able to identify three WAN services and give a general description. It was relatively common for candidates to omit to relate the descriptions to the Freelance Designers, or even sometimes to OGD.

7) Part (a) was generally answered well. Part (b) was poorly answered. Answers rarely related to the Freelance Designers, but were general benefits to OGD.

8) This question was poorly answered. Many candidates gave an evaluation of having access to the internet for employees rather than of sharing a connection.

Section b

9) This question was generally answered well. Many were able to define the term ‘IP address’ and were able to give an example of a valid IP address.

10) This question was poorly answered. Candidates were often able to give a standard definition of FTP (eg transfer of a file from one host to another over the internet) but were rarely able to expand on this.

11) Candidates most often gained half marks for this question, identifying features but failing to expand this into a description.

12) This question was, again, poorly answered. Many candidates spent too much time describing a client-server network and consequently gave too brief a description of any software. Candidates did not always make the distinction between the software needed for a local client-server network and the software needed for a network connected to the internet.

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