ASSESSMENT and
QUALIFICATIONS
ALLIANCE

General Certificate of Education

Information and Communication Technology 6520

Unit 4   Information Systems within Organisations

Report on the Examination

2008 examination – January series

General comments

There were some very good answers to all questions in this paper. Some topics caused confusion amongst a small minority of candidates but, in general, the majority of candidates attempted all questions and many showed good understanding. A minority of candidates persist in writing out the question before answering it, an unnecessary and time-wasting exercise. In questions where an example is given in the stem to aid the candidate, there were some candidates who then went on to re-offer the same example as an answer. This demonstrates either carelessness or rote learning when they are unable to remove the answer from a remembered list.

Question 1

Most candidates scored on this question, many getting both marks, recognising it as being about the management of change topic.

Question 2

The ICT code of practice question was answered quite well, with the full range of marks being seen. Many scored well, but quite a few misunderstood the requirements, despite being given an example in the stem of the question.

Question 3

Many gained 1 or 2 marks on the three parts, but some candidates seemed to be unclear about what is meant by the term 'deliverable', or that approval to proceed refers to milestones at each stage of a project, not just the initial go-ahead for the whole project.

Question 4

Despite being given a clear example in the stem of the question, many candidates failed to give a way of classifying information, instead offering three examples of one type of classification. The command word was "Give" which indicates short answer, yet some candidates wrote long descriptions with examples that gained them no extra marks and wasted their time.

Question 5

Most candidates scored well on this question about characteristics of an ICT team, although some were offering individual IT professional characteristics as their responses. Collective characteristics were required, such as having a good balance of skills in the team, for example that a member with good analytical skills can be given the task of gathering information, whereas a good technical programmer is set to work creating the code. The alternative extension for this could be "with a mix of experienced and trainee programmers so that the complex routines can be written by someone able to cope and the straightforward ones can be given to the less experienced members".

Question 6

Most candidates could offer three support methods suitable for Industry Standard packages, and attempt to describe them. However, when it came to describing a user for whom this method would be suitable, not as many could justify their answer – simply stating "novice" or "expert" user did not show why the method was suitable for that person. For instance, an answer that would score all three marks for one method might be:

> "A user guide or manual that come with the package, shows how to install the package and has sections with troubleshooting solutions and how to use tips for problems or queries that might arise. This would be suitable for an employee who travels around and comes across a problem that needs an immediate solution and who does not have the time, or easy access, to use the Internet or help lines."

A few candidates offered training methods, rather than support methods, which could not gain credit.

Question 7

In part (a) the majority of the candidates could read job titles off the organisation chart shown to identify two job titles at each of the three levels and thus gain all 6 marks. Some candidates wrote at length about how each person would use that level of information, unnecessary in this case.

However, short sentences for the suggested method of passing the information to the recipient were required for part (b) to gain credit, with a correct statement on whether the method suggested was formal or informal.

Question 8

Part (a) required a straightforward definition of Risk analysis and most candidates gained at least one mark, although many confused risks and threats, and also sometimes were not considering the ICT systems and data held, talking about "the organisation".

In part (b), many candidates could give a variety of threats and were able to describe a countermeasure for the threat. However, it must be remembered that a countermeasure is there to prevent the threat not just note it down to catch the culprit after the event (examples offered being by CCTV or audit trails). An acceptable response that gained three marks was:

> "A virus being introduced is one threat to the system and its data, which could be countered by having up-to-date anti-virus software running on the system at all times. This detects and destroys any virus before it can get onto the system."

Part (c) asked for criteria that should be considered when deciding on the disaster contingency plan for the firm of solicitors. Many candidates could offer some criteria and could describe why or in what way that criteria would be considered. However, many candidates offered the contents of the plan (backups location, backups timing, responsibilities) and failed to score many marks as a consequence.

Question 9

This essay question provided for some good and comprehensive answers, with most candidates attempting to answer all four bullet points, structuring their essay to address the areas mentioned.

The style of the essay was different this time, with two quotations to set the scene, and responses were seen in two styles –

One cohort of candidates used the metaphors given for what they were, an analogy of how important information is in an organisation, plus how information travels around an organisation. Credit was given in all cases where the candidate used these analogies in reference to information and the consequences of having no information/blood or a blockage in the communication channels/arteries. Some candidates went further with the body analogy which, if given the correct ICT terminology in the context of the essay, gained them marks.

The other cohort just ignored the metaphors and addressed the question of the importance of information, etc following the topics given in the bullet points. Again, many very good essays were seen, covering many aspects of information in organisations that are the basis of this unit.

The Structure and Data bullets often scored high marks, with the Information and Roles generally less well-addressed. Many candidates scored all 3 allowed "general" marks for making good points not directly falling under a bullet, some along the lines as stated before, but also for offering the definition of a Management Information System, or for detailing requirements under the Data Protection Act.

Because of the good engagement of the topic by many candidates, the maximum mark for Quality of Written Communication was seen more than in previous sessions and there were less lower or single marks awarded.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the **Results statistics** page of the AQA Website.