

APPLIED ICT

Paper 9713/11

Written A

General comments

It was encouraging that the number of candidates who appeared to have been well prepared for this assessment continues to increase.

There remain many candidates who require extensive teaching to perform well at this level.

It is common to find candidates rote learning answers from past papers. This was particularly evident when, although questions might relate to a similar topic, the scenarios had changed markedly. In this paper, as with any exam paper at this standard, candidates are required to show a level of understanding as well as a depth of knowledge. As has been highlighted in previous reports, this cannot be achieved by simply repeating bullet points from previous mark schemes. For example, in **Question 6b** the question referred to the use of time management software to help with organising meeting times. A number of candidates just wrote down everything about time management software they had learned from previous mark schemes including critical path analysis and other aspects of project management rather than answering the question. Centres are reminded that this is 'Applied ICT' and candidates are expected apply their knowledge to the context of the scenario. It is important for candidates to realise that they need to refer back to the scenario when answering questions.

In scenario 2 it was clearly stated that Mary would use presence and existence checks on the data but would need additional checks. **Question 4b** asked for these additional checks to be described yet still some candidates described the use of existence and presence checks in their answers.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

Many candidates did well on this question.

- (a) A number of candidates gained full marks with many scoring highly. There were a small number who were unable to describe any end effectors.
- (b) A number of candidates scored well on this question, although, not as well as part (a). A number of candidates did not go into sufficient detail omitting to write that the programmer *guides* the robotic arm apparently thinking that just holding the arm with no further explanation was enough.
- (c) This was also quite well answered but there were few disadvantages given.

Question 2

This question was also fairly well answered.

- (a) Candidates did well on this question with many stating product advertising and going on to describe it. Most did not however manage to describe it in sufficient detail to gain the third mark.
- (b) Again candidates answered this quite well. However, a number described a mouse when the question asked for devices used for entering information. Selecting from a menu is not considered to be entering information such as text.
- (c) This was the best answered part of the question. Pop-ups were well described although some candidates appeared to believe that they appeared on the web page rather than in front of it.



Candidates appeared to run out of ideas when describing how the drawbacks could be overcome with many re-wording the scenario.

Question 3

Many candidates gained one or two marks but appeared to lack the knowledge to gain more. Those candidates that did gain marks usually mentioned average mark being calculated and progress being compared. Conditional formatting was mentioned by some candidates but they often did not elaborate on this.

Question 4

This question requires further development of the candidates' skills.

- (a) Candidates did not appear to understand that the question was asking how information about the existing system would be recorded not how it would be collected. This distinction is made clearly in the syllabus. Many candidates described different methods of researching a situation. Candidates who did understand the distinction gave some good answers regarding Data Flow Diagrams in particular.
- (b) This question was answered better than part (a) few candidates gained very high marks. The majority of candidates did score reasonably well. Some candidates just reworded the scenario. A number described validation checks but did not refer to the candidate number or examination scores. Very few candidates actually discussed the suitability of the checks merely describing them.
- (c) This was the best answered part of the question. Several candidates managed to name types of data and give appropriate examples. Few, however, explained acceptance and rejection of data.

Question 5

This question requires further development of the candidates, skills.

- (a) (i) Many candidates did not score highly on this question despite it being basically a listing exercise. Candidates tended to gain at least one mark but few gained high marks.
- (ii) The vast majority of candidates did not identify the worker's number or its equivalent.
- (b) This part of the question was not answered very well. Many candidates just provided a list of items they would expect to see in a payslip.
- (c) This part of the question caused a number of issues for candidates. The question required candidates to compare and contrast the methods. Candidates could name and describe the methods but often did not compare them. Some stated that it was more expensive to have parallel running but not why or did not compare it to other methods. A number of candidates stated that direct changeover changed the old system to the new system. All methods do this but each method does it differently either immediately or over a period of time etc.

Question 6

Candidates generally did better on this question.

- (a) Candidates managed to make at least one or two points. The main issue with candidates' answers was the lack of specific use of the hardware and software with a number of answers lacking the detail required. For example, many wrote about email software being needed to send emails but not for what purpose.
- (b) Candidates were unable to score highly on this part of the question mainly for reasons given above.
- (c) This part of the question was well answered with many candidates doing well with most candidates gaining at least one mark.

APPLIED ICT

Paper 9713/12

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APPLIED ICT

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In scenario 2 a building materials company was described and the fact that it required a slideshow. **Question 4a** asked about the features specific to this slideshow could be used. Candidates rarely referred to the building company when describing slide show features.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

Many candidates did well on this question with a number scoring highly.

Question 2

This question was generally well answered.

- (a) Most candidates gained some marks. The biggest shortcoming was the tendency for candidates to describe how to use an online system rather than how to register. Even then candidates still made some valid points.
- (b) Most candidates were able to describe some features. Candidates again scored reasonably well.
- (c) This was reasonably well answered, although not as well answered as the other parts of the question. A number of candidates had appeared to have learnt previous mark schemes and answered from the point of view of the customer despite the question clearly referring to the bank.

Question 3

This question was also reasonably well answered. There were a number of candidates who had apparently learned answers from previous mark schemes and gave answers relating to the benefits of working from home rather than in an office.

Question 4

This question was not well answered as the scenario tended to be ignored particularly in part **(a)**.

- (a)** Candidates were able to name features but were unable to describe them in terms of how they would be used, particularly in the context of this scenario.
- (b)** Candidates were often given the benefit of the doubt despite the lack of reference to the scenario and were therefore able to gain marks on this question.

Question 5

This question requires further development of the candidates' skills.

- (a)** Candidates appeared to have only a general idea of the updating process. Very few were able to describe the steps in the process.
- (b)** Candidates were unable to describe financial reports just listing items that would be found on a payslip. Where candidates did gain marks it was generally in their descriptions of exception reports.

Question 6

It appears that many candidates had learned facts about time management software but were unable to put them into context.

Question 7

This question was not well answered. Candidates did not appear to have much knowledge of the process. Many concentrated their answers on writing about the creation of databases of candidate information.

Question 8

This question was generally better answered than 5, 6 and 7, although candidates did much better on parts **(c)** and **(d)** than they did on parts **(a)** and **(b)**.

- (a)** Very few candidates appearing to know what a data flow diagram consists of. Those that did gain marks just wrote about selecting hardware and software based on an overall view of the existing system. Because of their lack of reference to aspects of data flow diagrams, candidates were unable to gain many marks.
- (b)** Candidates appeared not to understand the design of file structure. Many wrote in detail about the need for indexed sequential access to data and little else. A sizeable number of candidates did not even attempt this question.
- (c)** Candidates did well on this question, many giving good descriptions of the different methods although not so many gave detailed advantages and disadvantages of the systems.
- (d)** Candidates were, again, able to describe the methods but few actually compared and contrasted the methods in any detail. A number of candidates repeated previous mark scheme answers such as examining documents despite the question asking for methods of obtaining feedback from users.



APPLIED ICT

Paper 9713/02
Practical Test A

General comments

The majority of candidates completed most elements of the paper. There were vast differences in the range of results from centre to centre and from candidate to candidate within centres. There were elements of all sections of the question paper that candidates had difficulty with and the paper gave a good spread of marks. Candidate errors were spread evenly over the sections of the paper, although the application of candidates' knowledge to produce the presentation and answer the questions within it caused a number of candidates some issues.

A very small number of candidates did not print their name, Centre number and candidate number on some of the documents submitted for assessment. Where clear printed evidence of the author of the work was present, Examiners were able to award the marks for these pages. If no evidence could be found, no marks were awarded to the candidate. It is not acceptable for candidates to annotate their printouts by hand with their name as there is no real evidence that they are the originators of the work.

Several candidates omitted one or more of the pages from the required printouts, the most frequent omissions being the formulae view of the spreadsheet and evidence of the file handling in the evidence document. A very small number of candidates submitted multiple printouts for some of the tasks and failed to cross out those printouts that were draft copies. If multiple printouts are submitted, Examiners will only mark the first occurrence of each page.

The presentation task gave some issues for candidates. While most demonstrated sound practical skills some did not attain many marks on the knowledge and understanding required for this paper. Despite an instruction to 'explain in your own words' a significant number of candidates copied blocks of text directly from the Internet. Examiners will give no credit for sections of text copied and pasted from the Internet.

Comments on specific questions

Question 2

The majority of candidates produced the presentation, although a very small number of candidates presented this as a document rather than presentation.

Question 3

This section was performed well by many candidates. A large number lost a mark for the selection of a sans-serif font for the candidate details. Some placed these details lower in the slide, resulting in this text overlapping the contents of one or more slides.

Question 4

The majority of candidates attempted most if not all of the questions set within the presentation. Few answered the first question correctly, with a significant number quoting text direct from the Internet which did not answer the question. Answers ranged from descriptions of housing projects in different parts of the world to a 'graphical representation of the company' and a variety of descriptions of a company logo. Few related this to the consistent set of formatting styles/rules/specifications or branding that was defined for the company. The second question was more frequently answered correctly, with the style ensuring a consistency of display or method of company recognition. There were a variety of answers for question 3, few discussing the development of templates or style guides, the most common incorrect answers were taken directly from websites that discussed the manipulation of various shapes to create a logo. The vast

majority of candidates gained the fourth mark with an array of answers, some directly copied and pasted text from the Internet

On slide four, few candidates related the first answer to the entry of data into a system or the transmission of data between elements of a computer system. The anticipated answers related to data entry but Examiners did give credit for appropriate answers relating to the verification processes used data transmission, If candidates had selected this type of verification follow through marks were allowed for the remaining three questions on this slide. The second question on slide 4 was not as well answered, rather than error reduction many candidates stated that verification “made sure that the data entered was correct”, or words to that effect. The accuracy of the data entry was not described by many candidates, few candidates appeared to explain that if incorrect data was given, it would still be entered and the verification process checked to ensure the data provided was entered as expected. The third question had two possible answers; many candidates attained one of these two responses, although a significant number erroneously answered with ‘proof reading’ rather than visual verification.

On slide five, most candidates could describe one of the correct answers, although a few copied large portions of text from the Internet describing the workings of SSL. Where this was not placed into their own words, no marks were awarded. The second question was answered well by most candidates citing .ac or .edu. A wide variety of alternative answers were discovered including .com .co. (country name), .net and even .uni. Many candidates entered an answer that related to a government or ministry, so attaining this mark. Several candidates also identified the country from the question but credit was not given for that on this paper. Question 4 was well answered with the majority of candidates understanding why wikis may present unreliable information.

Slide six was well answered by many candidates, almost all of those who answered the questions scored well. There were a small number of candidates who did not attempt this slide. Most produced a reasonable explanation of changing an image, some candidates gave specific examples of how they would change an image and many matched this in their second answer with a reason for the change to be made to an image, providing some extremely good answers. Almost all candidates who answered the third and fourths questions on this slide produced good answers and gained both marks.

Slide eight caused a few more problems for candidates, many gave perfect answers relating to the use of characters that do not appear on the keyboard, the second question was well answered by those candidates that included an example, like “the use of a copyright symbol or registered trade mark symbol to show...” or “the use of an accent to change the pronunciation of a word”. Descriptions of how to include these elements varied greatly depending upon the software used, although there were a small number of candidates who copied their answer directly from Microsoft Office help, in some cases including formatting and even (what would appear to be) the hyperlinks.

Slide nine was attempted with mixed success. Many of the candidate who attempted this question gained marks for **Questions 2 and 4**, but few had adequate descriptions of their own. There were a significant number of texts copied directly from the Internet for these answers; some were even generic descriptions not identifying that superscript raised a character above the baseline and subscript below. A small number of candidates gave the answers the wrong way round describing subscript as a character above the baseline and vice-versa.

Slide ten did not contain good descriptions of autotext. A very large number of candidates copied and pasted segments of text directly from help within their software package or from online sources. There were some good descriptions of autotext as commonly used text that is stored either within the software of template files for the software, many of the better responses again used examples to explain this. Most candidates who did not copy verbatim from the Internet gained the second mark. For the third mark there were excellent examples of the use of salutations, file paths and other items, frequently relating to headers and footers. Those candidates who attempted the first three questions gained the mark for the last question, although again there were a significant number of answers not in the candidates own words. Some candidates erroneously described the auto correction of spelling and grammar errors by specific software as autotext.

Slide twelve was generally answered well by most candidates. The majority seemed to understand what a hyperlink was, although some of the descriptions were too specific, relating it to only text or an image to create the link rather than either object, or to single applications types such as a webpage, rather than presentations, documents, etc. There were a significant number of quotes straight from the Internet, which gained no marks. The second answer was sometimes a reworded version of the first rather than a description of why a hyperlink may be used. Almost all candidates who attempted the third answer attained

a mark with some excellent descriptions of the features of a hyperlink. The most common incorrect answer was that a hyperlink was 'highlighted text', which again was taken directly from an (incorrect) webpage.

On slide 13 the first question was generally well answered with many responses relating to impact, enhancement and even responses relating to learning styles of the audience. Most candidates who attempted the question got a correct format for audio, but there were a number of candidates who confused video and audio formats. Few candidates gave a valid description of why their selected file type would be used, although a small number of candidates did produce excellent responses including discussions of compression rates.

Many candidates created the presentation as prescribed by the question paper, but a significant number of candidates set their candidate name, candidate number and centre number into a sans-serif font rather than a serif font.

Question 5

This question was very well done by the vast majority of candidates.

Question 6

The majority of candidates completed this correctly and gained all of the available marks. There were a number of errors including routing the hyperlink to the wrong page within the presentation and attempting to route to a slide through an external URL. Some candidates produced evidence of only two of the four hyperlinks.

Question 7

This question was very well done by the majority of candidates who attempted it.

Question 8

This question was very well done by the majority of candidates, most opened the file in an appropriate spreadsheet package.

Questions 9 and 10

These questions were very well done by the majority of candidates. The most common error was the lack of capitalisation in the word Project, in both **Questions 9 and 10**. A small number of candidates did not use the replace feature of the software and introduced typing errors.

Question 11

This question was generally well done by the majority of candidates; however, there were a number of data entry errors. The key element was to ensure that the data entered was recognised by the software as a date, so as to allow the manipulation of that date in subsequent steps. A significant number of candidates entered the year on the final date as 2010 rather than 2009.

Question 12

Almost all of the candidates who attempted this question deleted the correct row.

Question 13

Almost all candidates emboldened the correct row and column.

Questions 14, 15 and 16

The majority of candidates selected the correct functions (Day, Month and Year in many software packages) to complete these tasks and referred these functions to the correct cell in column B. A small number of candidates attempted to use Left and Right (and to a lesser degree Mid) functions for these questions but these did not manipulate date values as required.

Question 17

Those candidates who had returned numeric values in their formulae for steps 14 to 16, generally succeeded with this question, although there were a wide range of approaches, some through addition of the various cell references, some using the SUM function and other candidates with a mixture of the two. There were few errors in this, although the most frequent of these appeared to be the omission of one of the four cell references.

Question 18

Almost all candidates who had entered these four formulae replicated them as required.

Question 19

The vast majority of candidates entered this date correctly.

Question 20

A large proportion of the candidates used different date formats, most frequently with the year set as a 4 digit number or the month in text format. Some candidates reversed the day and month portions of the date.

Question 21

Many candidates completed the LOOKUP section of the question, using the external file to lookup the season for the month, although a few candidates did not use the external file. Despite the example in the question, few candidates added the date or brackets to the season to match the displayed details in the question paper. This question required some manipulation of the dates extracted in steps 14 to 16 by turning them into text format and specifying the format types. Few candidates concatenated this data either with a function or operators like '&'.

Question 22

The majority of candidates attempted to calculate the difference between the months without taking into account the differences in the year values between the end date and start date. Some candidates got the dates the wrong way round and tried to subtract the end date from the start date. Only a small number of candidates attained the correct answers in these cells. Most candidates replicated their formulae as required in these cells.

Question 23

This question appeared to give a number of candidates' issues, especially where they attempted to use a COUNTIF function with a substring of the full start date. Some candidates inserted additional columns to assist with this function. Those who did so were generally more successful than those who attempted to use a single column.

Question 24

The vast majority of candidates entered the text into both header and footer with 100% accuracy. A small number of candidates introduced typographical errors or entered the wrong case for some or all of the text.

Question 25

This question was very well done by the majority of candidates who attempted it.

Question 26

There were a significant number of typographical and case errors in the text entered into the header. A significant number of candidates appeared to omit this step and did not make any change to the text in the header.

Question 27

This question was very well done by the majority of candidates who attempted it, although a significant number of candidates did not show the row and column headings.

Question 28

This question gave mixed results with a few candidates performing superbly and producing a stacked bar chart for the first 5 projects. The majority of candidates produced a chart, frequently selecting an inappropriate chart type, but with limited or no labelling. A number of candidates did not include a chart title, nor label the axes to explain what the data represented. Many candidates did include a legend, most of these showing the relevant data, but some candidates included charts with legends displaying text such as series 1, series 2 etc. Although these are the series labels generated by the software's wizards, they are not appropriate and do not disclose what the different elements within each bar in the chart represents. In this question the candidates were asked to place their name, candidate number and centre number on the chart, many ignored this instruction and placed them in the header or footer of the document presented.

Question 29

Very few candidates demonstrated how they compressed the two files. Examiners were frequently unable to observe the two filenames highlighted and the compression process on the screen at the same time. There were attempts to show opened zip folders (or similar), marks were awarded for the evidence of how this was attempted.

Question 30

Very few candidates demonstrated screen shot evidence of their files. Many produced printouts of folders showing some of the required details but did not include full file types (often being truncated) or the date and time evidence required by the question.

Question 31

This question was frequently omitted or the question was not fully answered. The reasons given often related to 'make the file smaller' with no detail as to why this was important, for example: to reduce the amount of storage capacity required to store the file, or to reduce the transfer time for data across a network.

Question 32

This question was very well done by the vast majority of candidates.



APPLIED ICT

Paper 9713/31

Written B

General comments

There were many candidates who were able to apply their subject knowledge to the given scenario and earn high marks. Fortunately, there seemed to be fewer who had learned previous mark schemes by heart, as this is an A level paper so a discussion is required and not just a list of points.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

This question uses a topic that most candidates should have met at IGCSE and takes their knowledge a little bit further.

- (a) This was not well answered as the level of the responses were lacking in detail. Some candidates offered 'expert systems', which was an indication of lack of subject knowledge. Often the record of the product being sold was deleted rather than the `_number_in_stock` being reduced by one and the re-order level being checked. Several candidates discussed using a transaction file and then later updating the master file. A stock control system in a supermarket would usually be real time processing.
- (b) Candidates seemed well-prepared for this question on JIT systems.

Question 2

This question was one where standard answers applied to the scenario would earn marks and some candidates scored well here.

- (a) Candidates were sometimes unclear on how data could be collected by the supermarket. Some suggested expert systems could be used, which was not appropriate here.
- (b) Many candidates scored well by giving suitable types of information.

Question 3

Well-prepared candidates were able to score well here. A few candidates offered 'flight simulators', which shows a certain amount of confusion.

- (a) By applying the known methods to the scenario candidates could score very highly here.
- (b) This section was not well answered with many IGCSE responses, such as working at one's own pace. The question was a comparison with classroom training, where a member of staff can also work at their own pace.

Question 4

It was good to see fewer answers this session where candidates had not read the question carefully. It was good to see some candidates reaching an A2 standard. Candidates are expected to be familiar with expert systems from IGCSE, so generic answers could not score full marks. Some candidates offered 'sensors', which was not appropriate here.

- (a) Many candidates earned full marks here.
- (b) Some candidates were obviously very well-prepared for this topic and scored full marks.

Question 5

This was a popular question and many candidates scored well. But for one candidate to describe the use of screw driver, piping and plastic covered wires shows a lack of preparation.

- (a) Most candidates found it easy to score high marks here.
- (b) Some candidates were well-prepared for this important topic, so scored well.

Question 6

Candidates showed subject knowledge and understanding with primary and secondary research applied to the scenario. This question was usually well answered.

- (a) Many candidates earned full marks here. To include video conferencing as a means of conduction research however shows little knowledge of the time pressure on call centre staff.
- (b) Some candidates were able to score good marks when they used the scenario. Others gave answers that were too generic to earn marks. Many gave hacking as a disadvantage, which is inappropriate in this context so earned no marks.

Question 7

This question was a good discriminator, allowing strong and well-prepared candidates to score well.

- (a) Although few candidates scored full marks, a fair number showed their subject knowledge.
- (b) This section proved more difficult, as few candidates were able to explain parity checking sufficiently.

Question 8

A good number of candidates had learned the subject well and were able to describe the various topologies.

- (a) Many candidates failed to obtain these marks because the answer was not applied to the scenario. Some described the problems with LANs, which did not answer the question.
- (b) Most candidates scored well here.
- (c) Many candidates successfully described the hardware and so were able to earn good marks.

APPLIED ICT

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- (a) Most candidates found it easy to score high marks here.
- (b) Some candidates were well-prepared for this important topic, so scored well.

Question 6

Candidates showed subject knowledge and understanding with primary and secondary research applied to the scenario. This question was usually well answered.

- (a) Many candidates earned full marks here. To include video conferencing as a means of conduction research however shows little knowledge of the time pressure on call centre staff.
- (b) Some candidates were able to score good marks when they used the scenario. Others gave answers that were too generic to earn marks. Many gave hacking as a disadvantage, which is inappropriate in this context so earned no marks.

Question 7

This question was a good discriminator, allowing strong and well-prepared candidates to score well.

- (a) Although few candidates scored full marks, a fair number showed their subject knowledge.
- (b) This section proved more difficult, as few candidates were able to explain parity checking sufficiently.

Question 8

A good number of candidates had learned the subject well and were able to describe the various topologies.

- (a) Many candidates failed to obtain these marks because the answer was not applied to the scenario. Some described the problems with LANs, which did not answer the question.
- (b) Most candidates scored well here.
- (c) Many candidates successfully described the hardware and so were able to earn good marks.

APPLIED ICT

Paper 9713/33

Written B

General comments

There were many candidates who were able to apply their subject knowledge to the given scenario and earn high marks. Fortunately, there seemed to be fewer who had learned previous mark schemes by heart, as this is an A Level paper so a discussion is required and not just a list of points.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

This question uses a topic that most candidates should have met at IGCSE and takes their knowledge a little bit further.

- (a) This was not well answered as the level of the responses were lacking in detail. Some candidates offered 'expert systems', which was an indication of lack of subject knowledge. Often the record of the product being sold was deleted rather than the `_number_in_stock` being reduced by one and the re-order level being checked. Several candidates discussed using a transaction file and then later updating the master file. A stock control system in a supermarket would usually be real time processing.
- (b) Candidates seemed well-prepared for this question on JIT systems.

Question 2

This question was one where standard answers applied to the scenario would earn marks and some candidates scored well here.

- (a) Candidates were sometimes unclear on how data could be collected by the supermarket. Some suggested expert systems could be used, which was not appropriate here.
- (b) Many candidates scored well by giving suitable types of information.

Question 3

Well-prepared candidates were able to score well here. A few candidates offered 'flight simulators', which shows a certain amount of confusion.

- (a) By applying the known methods to the scenario candidates could score very highly here.
- (b) This section was not well answered with many IGCSE responses, such as working at one's own pace. The question was a comparison with classroom training, where a member of staff can also work at their own pace.



Question 4

It was good to see fewer answers this session where candidates had not read the question carefully. It was good to see some candidates reaching an A2 standard. Candidates are expected to be familiar with expert systems from IGCSE, so generic answers could not score full marks. Some candidates offered 'sensors', which was not appropriate here.

- (a) Many candidates earned full marks here.
- (b) Some candidates were obviously very well-prepared for this topic and scored full marks.

Question 5

This was a popular question and many candidates scored well. But for one candidate to describe the use of screw driver, piping and plastic covered wires shows a lack of preparation.

- (a) Most candidates found it easy to score high marks here.
- (b) Some candidates were well-prepared for this important topic, so scored well.

Question 6

Candidates showed subject knowledge and understanding with primary and secondary research applied to the scenario. This question was usually well answered.

- (a) Many candidates earned full marks here. To include video conferencing as a means of conduction research however shows little knowledge of the time pressure on call centre staff.
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- (b) Most candidates scored well here.
- (c) Many candidates successfully described the hardware and so were able to earn good marks.

APPLIED ICT

Paper 9713/04
Practical Test B

General comments

Once the data source was created from the files supplied, this paper was quite straightforward and most candidates were able to pursue the integration tasks with little difficulty. A number of candidates failed to pay enough attention to the detail of the output required however. The fundamental requirements of this practical paper are the creation of solutions that suit the business context; candidates need to take this into consideration to produce solutions that meet professional standards.

Comments on specific questions

Tasks 1 and 2 – Create the data source

Candidates were required to create an “efficient” relational database as the source for the integration tasks. The data was provided in different formats and candidates needed to inspect the data in order to formulate their solution. Many candidates failed to modify the initial data so that the imported tables could be related meaningfully. Whilst not an integral feature of this paper, Centres may be advised to cover “normalisation” in a little more depth and give candidates further experience of analysing data and proposing structures.

Candidates need to be aware of providing evidence of the format of the Boolean fields. The listing of the data type was not sufficient and evidence of the format was required for all three fields.

When explaining the relationships a simple statement such as, “One module may be taken by Many students” is more suitable than a technical treatment involving Primary and Foreign keys. Indeed without reference to the specific fields the answer is invalid.

Task 3 – A simple report

Most candidates were well prepared for this task and many scored highly. Where marks were lost it was usually a matter of not supplying the output completely as specified.

Task 4 – An export

For those candidates with a successful solution to task 3, this task was completed with little difficulty. A few lost some marks for inadequate formatting and inattention to the business context.

Task 5 – A Mail Merge

In this task, it was acceptable to use a database query as the data source or to apply filters in the word processing application. In the latter case, however, only a few candidates provided sufficient evidence of the method. A screenshot of the filtered list was not sufficient evidence.

Here again, production of letters of a professional standard was important. Marks were lost for simple formatting errors or not providing the information in the format or position specified in the template provided. Also of particular interest, is the number of candidates who did not format the date correctly.

Most candidates provided evidence of both the search criteria and the conditional fields used. In the latter case, a number of candidates used the wrong field as the criteria. In both cases it was the “Approved” field that should have been tested. Many candidates used the “Qualification check” field in one or both of the “IF Then Else” conditional field and produced the wrong inclusions. Another issue was the failure of the conditional field to provide correct results due to the use of the incorrect test criteria. The field used was

Boolean, so needed to be tested as “True” or False”. Some simple proof reading could have alerted candidates to these errors.

Task 6 – A parameter query and report

This task required candidates to bear in mind that they were creating a system for others to use, so the parameter query needed to include an appropriate prompt. Many candidates did not realise that a prompt such as “Insert Name” would be insufficient. The query searched for the candidates in the specified teacher’s Option Modules; at the very least, the user had to be reminded that it is a “Tutor’s” name they need to input.

The result of the query should only have included the information for the candidates whose applications had been approved. Very few of the candidates realised this. Once again, centres might bear in mind that this paper requires problem solving in a business context and is not just about the demonstration of data handling skills.

Task 7 – An exported and re-formatted report

Using the report prepared in task 6, candidates were required to export the data to a spreadsheet and format the table. For those candidates who successfully completed the previous task, this was a simple matter of adding a column and setting the required gridlines.

The solution to this task also highlighted the grouping of the report by teacher and by the Option Module. Some candidates neglected this second level of grouping. This can only have been due to not reading the question carefully. In general, the disorderly nature of the resulting table should have alerted candidates to consider, the business context and purpose of the printout.

Task 8 – The Menu

From the scenario, the solutions created by the candidate needed to be part of a system to be used by administration staff to produce information and documents as candidates apply and are processed. The question specified “a form or switchboard” which should have helped candidates to recognise that the interface needed to be within the database application. A number of candidates produced a word-processed document and used hyperlinks. Whilst hyperlinks could display the data required, the documents produced would only be based on up to date data if the report had been run and exported first.

Since the menu is intended as an interface for a user not involved in the creation of the system or skilled in the use of ICT, most descriptions and explanations of the menu items were not detailed enough to sufficiently inform such a user of the nature and purpose of the information to be displayed.

Centres will find it worth noting that when instructions require queries, reports, or documents to be created or saved with given filenames, the evidence must reference these names specifically.