Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2013

International GCSE in Information and Communication Technology (ICT)

(4IT0) Paper 02: Practical Paper

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GENERAL COMMENTS

Many candidates lose marks because of failure to pay attention to detail. For example:

- 10 marks were available for entering correct formulae into a spreadsheet. Many candidates failed to gain these marks because they did not submit a formula view of the spreadsheet. Often other printouts suggested that they may have done correct calculations. A smaller number of candidates lost marks for failing to submit a printout of the data view. In these cases it was not possible to award some of the formatting marks.
- Where screen shot evidence was required, many candidates lost marks because their screen shot was cropped or resized so that the vital information was not visible or not readable.
- Fewer candidates failed to enter their candidate details on their work. However it should be noted that the nature of this examination requires candidates to enter their details before printing to avoid suspicions of collusion by candidates. The instructions appear quite clearly in the question paper and in the specification and in the Instructions for the Conduct of the Examination (ICE) document.

Examiners were pleased to note that very few candidates appeared to have accessed the internet during the examination. Internet usage during the examination is a breach of the regulations and may result in candidates being disqualified.

Examiners noted that most candidates were able to complete all the tasks required, though a few candidates seemed to run out of time. It is suggested that candidates are advised that they should allocate their time so that they spend approximately one and a half minutes per mark. In this series guidance was provided about the length of time candidates should spend on each activity. This practice will be continued in future series.

Data files

Few issues with the data files were reported to Edexcel. These files are produced in different formats so that centre staff can make sure that the files open using the software available during the examination.

Centre staff are reminded that the data files should remain confidential until after all sessions of the examinations have been completed. It is a breach of the regulations for staff to discuss the contents of the data files with candidates. They are made available before the examination in order that a member of staff can check that the files work with the hardware and software available during the examination. After they have been checked, the files should be copied into the candidates' examination folders. A backup copy in a sub-folder is useful to enable candidates to re-start tasks should they wish to do so.

Labelling and printing

Centre staff should remind candidates that it is a requirement of this examination that typed candidate details are expected on all printouts. Experience has shown that where candidates have been encouraged to label all their documents before printing in the normal classroom environment, then this is rarely an issue during the stresses of examination work.

Some examiners noted that the quality of printout varied considerably. Centres should try to ensure that the printer is capable of producing satisfactory output during the examination window. The poor quality of some printout is often to the disadvantage of the candidate when the examiner cannot read or distinguish what the candidate has produced. Centre staff should note that there is no extra credit for printing in colour. Where candidates are asked to follow a colour scheme, such as in the presentation task in this examination, examiners use their judgement to decide whether the colour scheme has been used and will give the benefit of doubt to candidates where printouts are in monochrome.

Examiners reported that candidates at several centres did not collate their work in the correct order. It was also noted that candidates often did not attach their scripts to the cover sheet in the correct manner. This was often repeated by all candidates at a centre which suggests that the candidates had been incorrectly instructed by Centre staff. The cover sheet, when opened, has a punched hole in the top left corner. Candidates should punch a hole in the top left corner of each printout then attach the printouts to the cover sheet so that when the cover sheet is opened by the examiner the candidate's work is face up on the left with the marking grid on the right. Candidates at some centres make it very difficult for the examiner to gain access to the work by the way they submit their work. It would be helpful to examiners if thin cotton were not used as the pages tied in this manner tend to tear easily.

Examiners also noted that the work of some centres was not sorted into the same order as the attendance lists.

Resources

There are Assessment Materials available on the Edexcel website and Copies of the 2011, 2012 and 2013 papers, data files and mark schemes are also available for use in preparing future candidates.

In addition centre staff are reminded that Edexcel offers the "Ask the Expert" facility on its website where Senior Examiners can answer questions from staff about the specification and examinations.

Specific Comments

The examination consisted of 5 activities based on the theme of Whylde Safari Park.

Activity 1 – Using Art/Graphics Software

Candidates were asked to create a logo for the safari park. They were instructed to use an appropriate image and the initial letters of the company name (WSP). Candidates tended to lose marks because they did not follow the instructions in using just the letters WSP and a suitable image. Candidates often did not realise that photographs are not suitable for use in logos. Several candidates who managed to combine the text and image failed to gain full marks because they did not balance the size of the image and the text.

They were then asked to modify an image of an elephant for use in the presentation. They were asked to crop some unnecessary features and delete the two people shown in the photograph. They were also asked to add the words Whylde Safari to the image. It should be noted that candidates were not expected to spend a long time on the deletion of the people. Appropriate deletion was awarded two marks. It is therefore not expected that candidates will spend more than about 3 to 4 minutes doing this.

Key areas for improvement:
- being able to crop images carefully
- being able to amend images appropriately
- understanding the need for contrast in images and text
- understanding aspects of balance in text and images
- understanding of fitness for purpose in images.

Activity 2 – Using Database Software

Candidates were provided with a database file with three tables. The first table contained information about the sponsors of animals in the safari park. The second included details about the animals and the third had details of donations that had been made.

Candidates were asked to enter new data, sort and search the data, link the tables and produce a data entry form.

In Task DB1, candidates were asked to enter a new record, sort and print the table. When entering records into a database it is expected that the format of the existing records will provide guidance for how new data is to be added. Candidates need to check carefully especially with date fields where the format can vary between DD/MM/YYYY and MM/DD/YYYY. Examiners gave credit to candidates who entered the correct date in the same format as other records. Some candidates lost marks because they did not use the format of other records to inform their entry. This was most notable in the ADDR2 field where all the other records were in uppercase. Most candidates sorted and printed the table correctly.

For Task DB2, candidates were asked to carry out two searches. For the first, a simple single criterion was required and all fields were to be printed. Most candidates scored both marks on this part of the task. Those that did not gain full marks tended to include records where the sponsor was born

on 30 June 1997. The second query (for sponsors whose title was Mr and had a postcode starting with HH4) was generally done well. Most candidates also managed to include just the required fields.

For Task DB3, candidates were asked to link the three tables using appropriate relationships and to identify the primary key in one of the relationships. Many candidates lost marks because they did not display the correct type of relationship. Most of these showed only many-to-many relationships and did not take note of the guidance in the question paper that each sponsor could make more than one donation which would lead to a one-to-many relationship. Many candidates also failed to identify the primary key in the relationships – often identifying DONATION_REF as the primary key. Whilst DONATION_REF was a primary key, it was not one of the fields in the relationships and so did not gain the mark for this task.

In Task DB4, many candidates used a form wizard to produce the entry form. Whilst these will gain some marks, candidates are expected to customise the form so that data entry is easier to use and prompts are more descriptive than SPONSOR_REF or ANIMAL_REF. Many candidates did not use drop down selection field for at least one of the fields which would have simplified data entry – particularly for SPONSOR_REF and ANIMAL _REF. Screen shots of the data entry form were often truncated or produced so small that some of the evidence was not readable.

In Task DB5, candidates were asked to carry out a simple search on the related tables and print selected fields. This task was done well by a large percentage of candidates.

Key areas for improvement:
- entering data as required using existing format of other records as a guide
- sorting ascending and descending order
- printing in landscape/portrait
- printing without truncation
- simple searches
- searches using multiple criteria
- displaying all / selected fields in output
- producing a customised data entry form
- including drop down fields to restrict entry
- producing screenshot evidence which is readable and not truncated
- searching on related tables

Activity 3 – Using Presentation Software

Candidates were provided with the title slide for a presentation. They were required to make changes to the master slides and then produce three additional slides. They were provided with a design layout in the question paper. The final part of the task was to include hyperlinks to the presentation.

Candidates were asked to make several changes to the master slide. These included changing the background and font colour of the title area, adding a

logo and footer details. Many candidates failed to display the master slide and so were unable to gain full marks for this part of the task.

Using a design layout included in the question paper, candidates were then asked to produce three slides about the animals and how to support the park. Surprisingly some candidates produced more slides than were required or failed to gain marks because their third slide was not about just one of the other animals.

Whilst a number of the presentations were done well, examiners noted that many candidates failed to follow the design layout provided.

The inclusion of hyperlinks between the slides was not always done as might be expected. Some of the screenshots did not provide the necessary evidence to award the marks.

Key areas for improvement:
- editing a master slide
  - changing background and font colours
  - adding logos
  - adding footers
  - changing font styles
  - knowing the difference between serif and sans serif fonts
- careful copying of titles and text from the question paper and/or data files
- careful selection of appropriate text from data files
- choice of appropriate images from data files
- applying a given design layout to a set of slides
- use of appropriate sizing for a logo
- including hyperlinks in a slide presentation
- printing a presentation as handouts (2 to a page)
- producing appropriate screenshots to show evidence of work

Activity 4 – Using Spreadsheet Software

In Activity 4, candidates were provided with a spreadsheet containing two worksheets which held data about the staff at the Safari Park and the animals in the park. They were asked to add titles, format, sort, enter formulae and produce a graph to analyse the data.

In task SS1, they were asked to merge, centre the title, format and sort the table of data. It was expected that candidates would format the dates and currency columns of data consistently. Candidates should note that in order to make the information clearer, horizontal shading is far preferable to vertical shading. Often candidates used borders but occasionally these were included around blank rows which make the borders less useful in enhancing the spreadsheet. The sorting required in the question paper involved a secondary sort. Many candidates failed to gain full marks for this part of the task because they did not carry out the secondary sort.

In Task SS2, candidates were required to enter relatively simple formulae to multiply two cells and create a total. Most candidates scored well on this

task but marks were sometimes lost by inefficient use of the SUM function with several candidates using formulae such as =SUM(B4*D4) or =E4+E5+E6+E7+E8+E9. In the second part of the task, candidates were asked to use an IF statement to enter text depending on the value of the cell in the previous column. Many candidates did well on this part of the task – though some lost marks because although the values in the column were correct, they had not produced evidence of the formula used. As the final part of the task, candidates were required to print out selected columns. This was achieved by many candidates but some lost marks because they did not display the row and column headers to confirm that they had indeed printed the correct columns and had not deleted the other columns. It was expected that candidates would set the width of the other columns to zero so that they did not display on printing.

In Task SS3, candidates were required to produce a scatter graph which compared the height and weight of the animals in the park and add a trend line. Some candidates scored well on this task. However there was some evidence that not all candidates had been taught how to produce an appropriate scatter graph. Many candidates also failed to display the required straight trend line.

Key areas for improvement:
- formatting of text in a spreadsheet – for example:
  - merging cells
  - bold
  - italics
  - centring
  - left and right alignment
  - font size
- formatting of numerical data including dates and currency
- using appropriate borders and shading
- entering simple formulae using the arithmetic operators (*, /, + and -)
- entering formulae using simple functions (e.g. SUM)
- knowing when it is appropriate to use a function like SUM
- replication of formulae
- use of logical operators (>, <, and =; as well as combinations of these)
- printing formula view or data view of a spreadsheet
- printing selected columns in a spreadsheet
- printing without truncation
- producing suitable charts (including scatter graphs) from data
- adding a trend line to a chart
- producing appropriate titles and axis labels for a chart
- Understanding when a legend is required for a graph.

Activity 5 – Using Word Processing Software

Candidates were asked to prepare a mail merge letter to selected sponsors using a text file and a database table of contacts. In preparing the letter, candidates were expected to use standard conventions in the layout of the

letter. They were also asked to provide evidence of using merge fields by printing a copy of the letter displaying the fields.

Many candidates failed to gain full marks for the task because they did not print a copy showing the fields (before the merge) and failed to use standard layout for addresses and greetings.

Key areas for improvement:
- careful copying of text from the question paper and/or data files
- understanding and use of layout conventions for common document types such as letters
- merging a text document and a database table
- Consistent formatting of text and images.

Grade Boundaries

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