

APPLIED ICT

Paper 9713/11

Written A

Key Messages

As with last year there were a larger number of candidates who appeared to have been well prepared for this assessment; however, there were still a large number who were not.

It is still 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. The points listed on mark schemes are often a summary of the knowledge required to answer the question and should not be interpreted as an answer in itself. Candidates need to show an understanding of the scenario. 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.

Marks were distributed quite well with better ability candidates being able to score well on the paper. All questions differentiated well.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

Candidates did not do as well on this question as expected.

- (a) Many candidates were unsure of the names of the units. Some tried to name the arrows or “flow”. There were few totally correct answers. Most candidates attempted an answer to this question although few got each of the four parts correct. Some candidates took the arrows too literally and mentioned walls and air flow when the question specifically asked for components.
- (b) Many answers described only the working of an Air Conditioning system. Others showed an understanding of the role of the microprocessor only in general terms. Candidates did not gain marks for not specifically mentioning the actions of the microprocessor during and after the comparison of temperatures with the pre-set value. In each description of its action the microprocessor’s interaction with the fan and/or valve, compressor or actuator needed to be explicitly stated. The interaction with the fan was understood in the main; however, few candidates gave a description of the microprocessor’s interaction with the compressor and/or the valve. A number of candidates gave the vague answer of the microprocessors interaction with ‘the ac unit’. Some candidates gave a description of air-conditioning in general.

Question 2

This question was not well answered.

- (a) This was a straightforward question relating to one of the fundamental areas of the syllabus and nearly all candidates made an attempt at it. The question required the advantages and disadvantages to be given. Very few correct answers were given. A number of candidates found it difficult to be precise and differentiate between the methods. Many candidates managed to score some marks. Not all candidates were aware that answers should have related to the scenario and words like 'employee' and 'worker' should not have appeared in their answers. Candidates who thoroughly revised gained from providing answers to the sub questions in a clear manner and many candidates also gained marks by using general knowledge or common sense. It has to be emphasised that candidates need to qualify their answers by giving a reason for their remarks.
- (b) This was not well answered with several candidates not attempting to answer it. This was not a straightforward question and the last sentence in particular needed some thought. This question followed on from **Question 2(a)** and an awareness of this should have been useful in formulating an answer. Very few candidates gave the impression that the question was fully understood.

Question 3

This question was better answered than previous questions. A degree of leniency was shown when marking responses due to the differences in interpretation of the term shown in some countries. The new scheme of work, when it is published, will hopefully clarify these issues.

Question 4

This question was not well answered with the majority of candidates not gaining many marks. The question related to construction project management, a topic in its own right. Most candidates appeared to be answering a question set last year about time management and wrote about calendars for arranging meetings and stop watches for timing tasks without saying why this was relevant to completing the project on time. This question was attempted by the majority of candidates. Many candidates concentrated their answers on time management in general by mentioning diaries, PDA's and the actual word 'time' when the word 'progress' was needed. Few candidates qualified an answer relating to parallel processes with an example relating to the scenario. Some wrote about car manufacture.

Question 5

This question was generally better answered than many questions on the paper.

- (a) Many candidates gained good marks on this question, usually for entering email address, shipping address etc. Some candidates thought that customers were already registered and wrote about buying books. Most candidates seemed to know what they were writing about but did not use appropriate words for entering data.
- (b) Candidates gained marks for this part of the question. A number of candidates lost marks for not mentioning personal or bank details. The question was reasonably well answered, though; a number of candidates did not read the question fully and answered from the point of view of precautions that banks or customers should take, rather than the actual threats themselves.

Question 6

Candidates generally did well with this question.

- (a) Candidates generally gained at least one mark. It was rare to find any candidate who did not achieve any marks. A number of candidates, however, did not read the question properly and thought that compressed hours, flexitime or even teleworking would avoid staff redundancies.
- (b) Slightly less well answered than part (a) but many gained marks, usually for more job opportunities.

Question 7

This question was not as well answered as expected.

- (a) This was a straightforward question which was not answered at all well by most candidates. There were a number of no responses to this question. Candidates who attempted the question tended to ignore the words 'file structure' in the question and instead went for answers that described the data within a file rather than the file itself or even input and output formats.
- (b) Few candidates did not notice that the question related to the master file. Very few candidates gained marks for this question either because the question was not read carefully or a lack of understanding of the information that would be changed. The candidates did not qualify answers by the use of words like 'history' or 'so far this year'. Many gave name and id number.
- (c) Some encouraging answers were provided by candidates. They were able to gain marks for this question though very often it was not possible to tell if it was the computer or a human carrying out the tasks and calculations. Unfortunately, many described the updating process with no reference to payroll at all. Some candidates did not mention the master and transaction files.

Question 8

Those that answered this did quite well although there were a number of very general answers with some describing different types of documentation, even user documentation. Some candidates understood what was required but many thought that a description of the difference between technical and user documentation was what was required. This was a straightforward question relating to one of the main areas of the syllabus and candidates who revised did well on this question.

Question 9

This question was not very answered and a third of all candidates did not attempt it. Very few candidates gained marks, when they did it resulted in close to full marks being awarded. Very few understood this question though many wrote long accounts of completely unrelated prose. Too often Third Party was chosen correctly for the last part, but no reason was given and thus the mark could not be awarded. This question requires technical knowledge to be answered well and could not be answered by using general knowledge although many candidates tried unsuccessfully. A number of candidates described CTI in general rather than the differences between third party and first party control.

Question 10

This question was not as well answered as expected.

- (a) Candidates mainly answered from the point of view of the employee. Candidates did not appear to have read the question properly. Almost all candidates answered as if it was benefits and drawbacks for Issa rather than the company and so gained few or no marks for what was a relatively straightforward question. A lot of answers were trivial, 'e.g. will waste time walking the dog'.
- (b) Those candidates who correctly identified a phone conference were able to gain marks. Many thought video conferencing was being discussed. Not many candidates were able to identify the kind of phone needed.

APPLIED ICT

Paper 9713/12

Written A

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APPLIED ICT

Paper 9713/13

Written A

Key Messages

It was pleasing to note that there were a larger number of candidates who appeared to have been well prepared for this assessment.

It is still 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. The points listed on mark schemes are often a summary of the knowledge required to answer the question and should not be interpreted as an answer in itself. Candidates are required, in 'discuss' and 'explain' questions, to expand on the bullet points given in the mark scheme not just repeat them. They need to show an understanding of the scenario. 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. For example, in **Question 5b** the scenario referred to changing the hours of work so that operators would work fewer hours yet a number of candidates wrote about unemployment in general and greater employment for technical workers.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

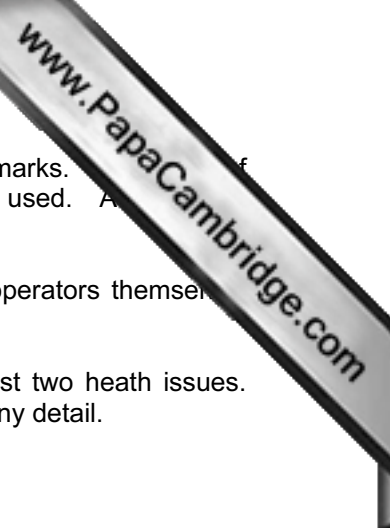
Many candidates did well on this question

- (a) Most candidates gained some marks although some appeared to answer from the point of view of staff wishing to work from home.
- (b)(i) Most candidates were able to describe the process to some degree with many gaining at least two marks.
 - (ii) This was quite well answered although a number of candidates did not answer the question as set and wrote about the drawbacks of using hand drawn designs in the first place.
- (c) Most candidates gained at least one marks although a number of answers were very general and did not give a clear difference.
- (d)(i) This was well answered with many candidates managing to identify at least two items of hardware.
 - (ii) This part was not as well answered as other parts of this question. Many answers only described the working of a Central Heating system or even Air Conditioning system. Many did not mention the microprocessor's part in the system.

Question 2

This question was generally well answered with many candidates appearing to understand the working of a call centre.

- (a) Most candidates gained some marks although many split the component parts of the headset thereby only gaining one mark.



- (b) Most candidates were able to describe CTI reasonably well gaining some marks. candidates gave an overall general description without saying how CTI is used. A number did not attempt this part.
- (c) Many candidates mentioned IVR software but did not understand that the operators themselves would not use this. A larger number did not attempt this question.
- (d) This was well answered with many candidates managing to describe at least two health issues. Most candidates identified the issues but a number did not **describe** them in any detail.

Question 3

This question was not as well answered as other questions on the paper.

- (a) The answers required further detail, with few candidates gaining more than one mark. Candidates' responses tended to concentrate on the speed of accessing individual records without otherwise answering the question. Few candidates referred to the need for batch processing as well as fast access under certain circumstances.
- (b) Many candidates appeared able to list safeguards without describing them. A number gave all four answers related to data protection acts.
- (c) Some candidates did not describe the benefits in any detail. Candidates did, however, gain more marks on this part than the other parts of this question. A number of candidates ignored the context of the question and gave benefits to the customer instead.
- (d) Candidates were less able to describe drawbacks than they had been to giving the benefits. Candidates often listed the drawbacks without describing them. Many gave very vague, single phrase, drawbacks such as 'the system could crash', 'the system could be hacked'.
- (e) Most answers made four separate points which all related to having more time to themselves or family. Candidates appeared to understand what part time working is but had not studied the implications in a work-based setting.

Question 4

This question was well answered with most candidates gaining at least two marks.

Question 5

This question was generally well answered with most candidates gaining at least two marks.

Question 6

Candidates provided answers which required more detail.

- (a) There seemed to be a lack of depth of knowledge regarding this topic. Candidates appeared to have learnt an overview of how documents are examined without understanding how they help to identify the inputs, outputs and processing.
- (b) The majority of candidates succeeded in only making one valid point, though the more comprehensive answers sometimes gained two or three marks.
- (c) Many candidates did not make any reference to the improvements which would be identified. The marks gained by candidates were generally awarded for their descriptions of testing.
- (d) Candidates' answers were very mixed with some candidates thinking the question was about technical documentation in general and whilst others referred to user documentation. Many candidates gained at least two marks.

APPLIED ICT

Paper 9713/02
Practical Test A

Key Messages

The majority of candidates completed all elements of the paper. There were vast differences in the range of results from Centre to Centre and from candidate to candidate within Centres. The paper gave a good spread of marks. The application of candidates' knowledge to produce a report on the RockICT website caused a number of candidates some issues.

A small but significant number of candidates did not print their name, Centre number and candidate number on some of the documents submitted for assessment. Without clear printed evidence of the author of the work, marks can not be awarded for these pages. It is not permissible 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.

A small number of candidates omitted one or more of the pages from the required printouts. Some partially completed the database task or submitted only partially complete validation tests. A small number of candidates submitted multiple printouts for some of the tasks and then did not cross out those printouts that were draft copies. Where multiple printouts are submitted, only the first occurrence of each page will be marked.

The word processing task gave some highlighted some issues for candidates. While many demonstrated sound practical skills some did not attain many marks on the knowledge and understanding required for this paper. A small number of candidates copied text directly from the website or other Internet sources and submitted this as their own work. No credit will be given for sections of text copied and pasted from the Internet, however in the context of the document it was acceptable to paraphrase elements of the text or use direct quotation to support their observations.

Comments on specific questions

Questions 2 to 4

This section was performed well by many candidates. The majority of candidates created the database tables correctly and used appropriate field names. Few managed to set all the data types in the Web table into their most effective and efficient field types. A number of candidates used the default settings suggested by the import wizard if they had used Microsoft Access. Some candidates set the Price_1 and Avail_1 fields as specified then set the other related fields Price_2, Price_3, Avail_2 and Avail_3 to other field types or formats rather than the same types.

A significant number of candidates did not set all four of the correct fields as primary key fields. Two of these fields were identified to help the candidates with this process, some candidates allowed the import wizard to add new 'ID' fields to these tables rather than using the recommended fields. Where the key fields were incorrect, few candidates created the correct relationships in subsequent steps.

Questions 5 to 7

The creation of the relationships was not as well completed as anticipated. Most candidates created the relationship given in the question paper as instructed. A significant number of candidates created a relationship between the two correct fields, however, they used an incorrect relationship type, frequently displaying indeterminate relationships rather than one-to-one or one-to-many. A small number of candidates did not print detailed evidence of the relationships, either showing the fieldnames at both ends of the relationship (if a relationship diagram was used as evidence), or did not show the one-to-one and one-to-many settings.

Questions 8 and 9

Question 8 presented a number of issues for candidates. Most candidates attempted this question, performing well. A significant number of candidates cropped the screen shot of the validation rule so it did not include evidence of the field selected. Whilst many of the rules were created correctly using a range of methods including, for example: greater than 31/12/1899, greater than or equal to 1/1/1900 etc., there were also a significant number of candidates who did not set correct rules. The most common error was less than 1/1/2011. Evidence of these rules was not always presented. Where Centres are using open source software for this type of question, it is important that screen shots are presented to show the evidence of validation rules and that validation error messages clearly show which field/s they relate to. Few candidates included validation text that described the correct parameters for data entry, many using the text from the question paper and keeping the inconsistent formats rather than presenting consistent date formatting in the error message.

Questions 10 and 11

Although the instruction was to create a test table in the evidence document, some candidates created a table within their database package. Incorrect spelling and incorrect initial capitalisation were frequently included in candidate submissions. The three expected data types were Normal, Abnormal and Extreme. The majority of candidates who entered these selected erroneous data for at least one of these categories. Testing requires the use of both expected and actual results. Performance on this section was variable, particularly from Centre to Centre.

Question 13

Many candidates completed the search with 100% accuracy, although a significant number selected the three bands but did not include the selection based upon the availability fields.

Question 14

A small number of candidates did not complete this step; the majority did calculate the average price for each album. Some candidates decided to create this field with a fieldname that was not specified in the question paper. A significant number of those attempting this question calculated the sum rather than average of the three prices from the different websites. Most candidates attempting this question formatted the calculated control to pounds sterling with 2 decimal places.

Question 15

Most candidates generated a grouped report with the correct groupings. Not all of these candidates included grouped averages. Many candidates did not display the three availability columns in Yes/No format. Many candidates using Microsoft Office for this task had default settings rather than specified formatting for these fields. The calculation of the average price for each group was generally completed correctly, as was the accuracy of the data entry for the report title.

Question 16

There were a variety of responses to this question. This ranged from candidates who had simply copied the content from the RockICT website and scored no marks, to those who responded to each of the 6 areas and discussed each area for each of the 4 web pages. The reviews for Mike Jones were generally of a high quality, many candidates identified suitable points for fact or bias. Fewer candidates identified suitable points for reliability and accuracy in general, although many gained marks for referring to these in the correct context. The vast majority of candidates gained both marks for recognising and briefly describing the currency of the page. The suitability for the audience was frequently ignored for this web page although some candidates correctly identified the language, readability, spelling and grammar as suitable for a teenage audience.

For the second webpage, few candidates used their research skills to find out about the artists Henry Ford, Van Gogh and Beethoven. Candidates who did research these historical characters were able to identify the lack of reliability and accuracy of the material presented. These candidates scored full marks for identifying that this page was a work of fiction rather than fact or opinion and therefore there was no bias. Those candidates who did not research the sources frequently scored marks for evidencing that the statements were opinions.

Bias marks were awarded if supported by suitable evidence, for example: there is bias because Beethoven is a musician and therefore his comments may impact on competitors sales, or that there is no bias because they all lived in the past therefore could not either wish to promote or affect record sales. Although the page contained little indication of currency, candidates who referred to the lack of references also gained marks.

Few candidates identified the lack of suitability for the audience as the text contains language which is too complex for 12 year olds (the lower end of the target age range). Very few candidates identified the incorrect grammar in the text, for example: the inconsistent use of lower case F for Ford and capitalisation of CO. This could indicate suitability, reliability or accuracy depending upon the way the information was presented.

The page created for the ex-manager Graham Browely contained indicators that it was a personal opinion rather than fact. Many of the candidates identified this but did not present the evidence of the indicators to support their judgement. A majority of candidates who scored marks for this page identified the information as biased, fewer gained a second mark for giving an appropriate reason like "...biased because he used to manage the band, they sacked him and now they are famous." Marks were awarded for both reliability and accuracy, either for or against the webpage being reliable or accurate, depending upon the supporting evidence presented, or logical conclusion drawn from this evidence. Examples included "It is unreliable because he is biased and therefore presents the information in an emotive way" and "it cannot be accurate because of the bias he may have made some of it up"; or "it is accurate because he used to be the manager and therefore has a sound knowledge of this band so would present facts despite his bias".

The date of February 2011 was used by many candidates to indicate currency; most candidates who attempted this section attained both marks for this. The suitability for the audience was sometimes ignored for this web page although some candidates correctly identified the language, readability, spelling and grammar as suitable for a teenage audience.

The review by Joan Hoarse of 'My Pony Magazine' was also her opinion although few candidates identified it as such. A significant number of candidates gained a single mark for no bias, although few went on to suggest there was no evidence to link her to the band or have any reason for promoting the band to gain a second mark. It is unlikely that Joan Hoarse proved a reliable source of information, although a number of candidates did think that "This album sounds pink, sweet and cuddly..." was an accurate description of a rock album on a rock music website. This was in direct conflict with all other information and stylistic choices presented on the page.

Although the page contained little indication of currency, candidates who referred to the lack of references also gained marks. A number of candidates successfully identified the lack of suitability for the audience as the text contains a number of indicators that the target audience for the album was not for 12 to 16 year olds.

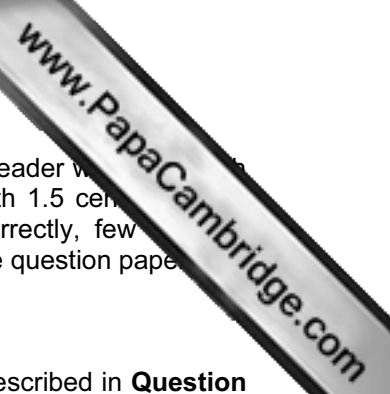
Question 17

The setting of the page size and orientation was performed well by the majority of candidates. Page margins presented more of a problem for a significant number of candidates. Few set all 4 margins as specified. The majority of candidates split the page into 2 columns, but few set the column width so that there was a 2 centimetre space between them.

Question 18

The majority of candidates included the header, a few gained full marks for this section. The selection of the logo from the website was generally completed as required, although a number of candidates used a screen shot from the page, cropped rather than saving the image directly from the web page. Many candidates resized the image as anticipated, although a small number distorted the image in their attempt to resize it.

Almost all candidates entered their name, Centre number and candidate number into the header, a small number ignored the instruction to place each on a new line. There was an instruction to right-align this data. Few candidates right-aligned the data to the margin settings for the page, instead accepting the default margin settings for the page rather than those specified. Some candidates followed the instruction to ensure



that "...the header aligns with the margins and appears on every page" by setting the header width to match the margin width. A small number of candidates successfully positioned the logo with 1.5 centimetres of white space both above and below the logo. Many set the whitespace above correctly, few set the whitespace below, using the software's default settings rather than those specified in the question paper.

Question 19

Similar alignments of the page margins and footer margins were discovered to those described in **Question 18** above. Many candidates had placed the required object/s in the footer but did not attain the marks due to their relative positions. The inclusion of an automated file name was not well completed by some of the candidates. Automated page numbering was included by most candidates, although a small number of candidates included the total number of pages.

Question 20

Almost all candidates set the font size to 12 points high, many of these included the double line spacing. The vast majority of candidates also set the text to a sans-serif font, although in a small number of cases this was not set with consistency throughout the entire document, particularly where excerpts had been cut and pasted from the web pages. Most candidates set the alignment of the body text to fully-justified.

APPLIED ICT

Paper 9713/31

Written B

Key Messages

The paper this year was written in a slightly different style and most of the questions were based on topics with which the candidates should have been familiar. There were a large number of entries of a single candidate. The candidates from large Centres produced some good answers

Many candidates did not answer the paper fully. Candidates must read the scenario so that their answers can be set in context to the situation described. Many candidates appear to know the syllabus content but lose marks by not applying what they know to the question set.

The language used by candidates was good. There were a number of candidates who did not answer in the space provided. If answers are written elsewhere on the question paper, a reference to the alternative location should be identified.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

This was an easy question about a music entertainment.

- (a) (i) Some candidates seemed to think the question refers to MP3 **players** i.e. as an external device which is connected to the home entertainment system. No marks were awarded if they discussed aspects such as storage capacity. A number of candidates do not get the marks for compression marks because their answers are not detailed enough e.g. "songs are compressed"
- (ii) Many candidates were awarded marks for some form of "connecting other devices". Many candidates, however, confused USB **port** and USB **device**.
- (iii) Candidates often refer to storage capacity in general, not how it is used in the given scenario. Some candidates achieved a mark for stating additional storage. Many candidates refer to use in mobile phone or digital camera in general and do not apply their answer to the scenario.
- (b) Some prepared candidates gained full marks as they had been taught this subject. Some candidates demonstrated limited knowledge of the use of computers to dial and present the operator with a script.
- (c) The responses given by the candidates required further detail to gain the highest marks. Many candidates gave "expert system" as an answer rather than the anticipated answers from the mark scheme.

Question 2

This question concerned the application of financial models. A number of candidates answered in terms rather than relating to the scenario. A number of candidates described CAD and physical models instead of the answers provided by the mark scheme.

- (a) This question was not very well answered. Some candidates confused the correct answer with project management (mention of GANTT charts for instance).
- (b) This question was not very well answered. Responses provided by higher-performing candidates still required further expansion. Responses such as “the amount of material needed” and “wages will need to be considered” are not suitably detailed to award full marks.
- (c) Many candidates achieved two marks for mentioning the use of GANTT charts and PERT

Question 3

Candidates are required to understand the difference between an intranet and the Internet, in particular, with regards to security.

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Question 6

A nice topic for candidates to show their level of understanding and this was a quite easy question provided the candidates read the question. The answers required candidates to use the scenario and many did.

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This question was written to allow candidates to give a full answer to the problem of the digital divide. Many candidates focused just on the disabled divide which severely limited their marks. Candidates must consider the fuller landscape and not just focus on one element.

- (a) Candidates often stray from technical aspects into 8b answers. Most common answers refer to reducing costs and increasing availability of hardware and telecoms.
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Question 9

A number of candidates focussed on lifestyle rather than anti-social behaviour. Many candidates have some idea of unauthorised access but did not explain in sufficient detail. Quite a large number of candidates made reference to spam, phishing and pharming without further explanation.

APPLIED ICT

Paper 9713/32

Written B

Key Messages

The paper this year was written in a slightly different style and most of the questions were based on topics with which the candidates should have been familiar. There were a large number of entries of a single candidate. The candidates from large Centres produced some good answers

Many candidates did not answer the paper fully. Candidates must read the scenario so that their answers can be set in context to the situation described. Many candidates appear to know the syllabus content but lose marks by not applying what they know to the question set.

The language used by candidates was good. There were a number of candidates who did not answer in the space provided. If answers are written elsewhere on the question paper, a reference to the alternative location should be identified.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

This was an easy question about a music entertainment.

- (a) (i) Some candidates seemed to think the question refers to MP3 **players** i.e. as an external device which is connected to the home entertainment system. No marks were awarded if they discussed aspects such as storage capacity. A number of candidates do not get the marks for compression marks because their answers are not detailed enough e.g. "songs are compressed"
- (ii) Many candidates were awarded marks for some form of "connecting other devices". Many candidates, however, confused USB **port** and USB **device**.
- (iii) Candidates often refer to storage capacity in general, not how it is used in the given scenario. Some candidates achieved a mark for stating additional storage. Many candidates refer to use in mobile phone or digital camera in general and do not apply their answer to the scenario.
- (b) Some prepared candidates gained full marks as they had been taught this subject. Some candidates demonstrated limited knowledge of the use of computers to dial and present the operator with a script.
- (c) The responses given by the candidates required further detail to gain the highest marks. Many candidates gave "expert system" as an answer rather than the anticipated answers from the mark scheme.

Question 2

This question concerned the application of financial models. A number of candidates answered in terms rather than relating to the scenario. A number of candidates described CAD and physical models instead of the answers provided by the mark scheme.

- (a) This question was not very well answered. Some candidates confused the correct answer with project management (mention of GANTT charts for instance).
- (b) This question was not very well answered. Responses provided by higher-performing candidates still required further expansion. Responses such as “the amount of material needed” and “wages will need to be considered” are not suitably detailed to award full marks.
- (c) Many candidates achieved two marks for mentioning the use of GANTT charts and PERT

Question 3

Candidates are required to understand the difference between an intranet and the Internet, in particular, with regards to security.

- (a) There were quite a lot of general descriptions of intranet i.e. not applying knowledge to the given scenario. Other answers were often not specific to intranet. Some candidates did not distinguish enough between an intranet and the Internet. Data transfer/email is mentioned but the answers did not relate specifically enough to internal use. A number of candidates think that the intranet is used for online banking.
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APPLIED ICT

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APPLIED ICT

Paper 9713/04
Practical Test B

Key Messages

Whilst most candidates were well prepared for this exam in terms of skills and experience, some Centres need to draw attention to the problem solving nature of this paper. For some tasks, there are, therefore, a number of acceptable solutions. This requires the marking criteria to reward successful solutions in terms of outcomes. The criteria also recognise that the essence of the examination is to simulate the creation of a minor business system. As such, solutions should be robust and repeatable in another cycle with the next set of data. In the case of this session (June 2011), candidates' solutions should be seen to be applicable, (without significant alteration) to the next month's prize draw.

Also of note is the widespread lack of proof-reading printouts and verifying results. Details of these issues are provided below in the coverage of each task, Centres could gain advantage by spending some time on these issues.

Comments on specific questions

Task 1 – Generation of the prize winners.

This task involved several stages. The outcome of this task provided the data for subsequent tasks so partial success at this stage was necessary. All candidates created the data and the opportunity to progress. A number of answers produced erroneous results that would have been easily spotted by manual verification.

The first step was to extract data from the RockICT website. This was most easily achieved by simply cutting and pasting the "Prize Draw" table into a spreadsheet application. Linking the data from the website was not necessary, but a good candidate would have seen this as a possible advantage for future processing.

Candidates were then required to create a table to combine the prize data with the randomly chosen winner from the list of eligible customers and their details extracted from the full customer details file. This could be accomplished by a number of "Lookup" formulae and a generated random number.

For this purpose, the "RANDBETWEEN" function was most suitable. Many candidates attempted to use the simple "RAND" function but very few achieved the required bounds (an integer value from 1 to 249). At this point, the higher performing candidates realised that in subsequent cycles (months) the number of eligible customers would be different; so the solution should include a mechanism for the bounds for the random number to be calculated automatically rather than entered manually after inspection of the list.

In terms of the lookup formulae, the data was to be drawn from three sources; the "Current Prizes", the "Draw Entrants" and the "Customer details". Many candidates chose to transpose the "Current Prizes" data extracted from the website and use a "Vertical" lookup function. This was quite acceptable in this case but unnecessary steps are best avoided. The "Horizontal" lookup function was more suitable.

Most erroneous results were achieved when candidates determined the lookup values for the Draw Entrants (D2:D6) and also applied them to the Customer Details data. A simple visual check that the resulting customer surnames matched the customer email Addresses could have alerted candidates to this error.

It was pleasing to note that many candidates recognised the need to follow a given specification exactly and most formatted the resultant table as required. This needed to include the text wrap and alignment formatting.

Task 2 – A mail merge with a conditional field

The first stage of this task was to design and create a database from which required certificates mail merged.

The instructions required that the database included, “only the fields required, appropriate relationships and no unnecessary duplication of data”. These requirements were met by very few candidates. Most candidates clearly imported all the data without analysis of the fields and normalisation of the tables. Thus, some Centres could benefit their candidates by spending time on the analysis of data i.e. “data handling” rather than skills within a database application. Centres might be advantaged by addressing this issue.

The amount and presentation of the evidence necessary is also worth considering. For this task, only detail of the primary keys, the relationships and the tables and fields imported was necessary. For some database applications, most of the evidence could have been provided by a screenshot of the final relationship diagram.

The mail merge of the data from the database to the certificates was universally well done. Almost all candidates were well prepared for this part of the task and provided the evidence as required. A number of candidates did not configure the condition field successfully. The correct solution required the format of the condition to be compatible with the format of the “Insurance” field in the database. For example, if the field was set as Boolean, the condition needed to match using “True” or “False” as the criterion. Candidates who set the field as text would need to use “Y” or “N”.

If candidates had attempted to verify their results by checking which customers matched the insurance criteria, the errors could have been spotted. It was pleasing to note that most candidates provided the evidence of the mergefields used without resulting to screenshots.

The resulting certificates were required to be formatted consistently and fit on a single page. A number of candidates did not ensure that all the certificates fitted on to a single page and that all the fields were formatted as required. This was particularly evident in the resulting conditional text. Proof-reading printouts with reference to the specification is necessary before submission.

Task 3 – Automated reformatting of the certificates

Candidates who attempted this task usually completed it well, however, a number did not recognise they were simulating the creation of a system for others to use. Their new toolbar or menu item should have been labelled meaningfully. Text such as “Macro1” or “Task 3” carries no information as to the function and purpose. A button or menu item labelled “Format Certificates” would suffice.

Also of note is that many printouts showed a lot of unnecessary code. This was often generated by mistakes by candidates in recording their steps and the subsequent corrections. It is not unreasonable to expect code to be “cleaned up” and Centres may be wise to spend some time helping candidate to determine the efficiency of macros or procedures rather than just the result.

Candidates were then required to test their solution and produce the reformatted certificates. At this point, some did not remember the specifications provided in Task 2 and ensure that all the certificates fitted a single page. Simple proof-reading” of the result against the specification provided could have avoided this error.

Task 4 – Publication of the “Prize Draw” results as a web page

The data for publication needed to be generated from a database report.

Most candidates provided a solution that fitted the specification provided, and many were careful to format the report exactly as shown. No issues of note were identified.

Subsequently, however, the report was required to be published as a webpage, and the paper required the evidence to be provided as a screenshot of the browser view.

Although this was generally well done, a number of submissions were cropped too severely to verify the screenshot was not from a database view, and, in some, the export had affected the formatting of the table unduly. In this latter case, proof-reading would once again have provided the opportunity to edit and ensure the output met business standards.