AQA

ASSESSMENT and
QUALIFICATIONS
ALLIANCE

General Certificate of Secondary Education

Business and Communication Systems 3126

Higher Tier   3126/2H

Report on the Examination

2007 examination - June series

Higher Tier – Controlled Test (3126/2H)

General

Almost all candidates attempted all five tasks, though not necessarily all the parts of each task. Some candidates completed the flyer but did not attempt the note. Possibly they either thought that question 5(c) was too demanding or found they had run out of time. Some candidates, particularly in the higher tier, might have gained more marks by tackling this question and spending less time on the flyer itself.

As usual, candidates displayed a high level of technical competence but found it harder to comment on and discuss their own and other's use of ICT. The mark scheme for any question (or series of questions) usually has either an implicit or explicit gradient of difficulty. Answers that are explained in detail and/or justified by reference to the paper or question scenarios will almost always receive additional marks.

It is essential that that the process of printing out and collating the answers is managed effectively. Occasionally, an otherwise successful candidate would fail to include a printout and therefore lost marks. This often happened with the printout of the spreadsheet showing formulae. Though this was most likely to be a candidate error, it would be very sad if any candidates were to be disadvantaged just because they had forgotten to include a printout in their folder.

Centres are also reminded that candidates should present their work in **task order** in the official stationery folder. Every printout should include the centre number and candidate name and number. There is no need to use tags, staples or paper clips to secure the printouts – just folding the flap over the work is all that is necessary. It is very frustrating to remove these if work is in the wrong order or when the printout is in landscape format.

Task One

Few candidates had any problems with questions 1(a) and 1(b) and most errors were keying in mistakes. Most candidates clearly had a good knowledge of basic spreadsheet skills. However, many accepted the default currency format (showing two decimal places, ie displaying pence) rather than the requested format displaying only pounds.

Question 1(e) proved a considerably bigger challenge. A significant number of candidates could not correctly increase the 2006 values. Even fewer realised that the formula for total expenses in 2007 could not just be copied across as a percentage increase from 2006.

Only a very small number of candidates could change the value of sales income to generate the required level of net profit for 2007. Though it would have been simplest to use the goal seeking function, it was not necessary to do so. Candidates were expected to experiment with different values in order to achieve the correct answer. Any change in the figure for sales income compared to 2006 would gain at least one mark. It was clear that a substantial minority of candidates had little experience of using a spreadsheet as a model.

The chart showing the break down of total costs, question 1(g), was seldom done correctly. Most candidates selected the correct chart type, a pie chart, though the choice of any chart type received some credit. Often the segments were not properly labelled. Higher tier candidates should be able to do more than use the chart wizard.

Task Two

Many centres are clearly teaching their candidates the 'correct' letter layout and their candidates gain a high proportion of the allocated marks (ten). As usual, the commonest mistakes involved the date, which was often either in the wrong format, or the wrong place, and sometimes both. In the absence of any clue as to her marital status, Emma was often given the wrong title – it should be Ms.

Few candidates correctly answered question 2(b) by using the paper and question scenarios to explain what Paul wished to do. In particular, few correctly identified the "Hereford Farmers' Market group". However, most candidates correctly listed the information that Paul wanted.

Task Three

This task differentiated very successfully between candidates. Most could work out a database structure with five fields (six were allowed if an ID field was created). However, the instructions in question 3(a) sometimes seemed to be ignored and there were often spelling and capitalisation errors in the names of the businesses and owners. Simon Leeds was usually included as one of the 'possible suppliers', despite the fact that he quite clearly disqualified himself.

In question 3(b), the production of a list of the suppliers with those providing the best, quickest and most regular service first, required a sort on the two relevant fields, which proved difficult. However, a successful search also gained some marks.

Task Four

The layout of the title and subtitles of the report were more likely to be correct than their wording. In general, the worst answers consisted of vague comments about the use of ICT which were unrelated to the scenario. The best answers were precise and relevant.

Question 4(b) generated some particularly good answers, although the advantages of coding were tackled less successfully than the disadvantages.

Responses to question 4(c) often described the advantages of being able to sort numeric data in to order.

The best answers to question 4(d) referred to the fact that a database could order or select data with a query, ie sorting or searching. The worst answers talked about saving space compared to a paper-based storage system.

Question 4(e) was often well answered with appropriate and relevant responses.

Task Five

Candidates produced some impressive flyers. This task was basically a test of their ability to use a range of text, paragraphing, and graphics tools. Many centres were concerned that candidates would lose marks for failing to use an appropriate piece of clip art. However it was only necessary to use a minimum of one graphic tool (up to a maximum of six) and this could include shapes, lines, borders and word art.

Most candidates were able to describe how they had used tools to draw attention to the flyer. However, most commented on the words they had used to encourage people to buy tropical fruit, rather than referring to how they had used tools to present them effectively, eg by inserting them into an autoshape.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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