

**Edexcel Key Skills
Chief Examiner's Report
Information Communication Technology - November Test Series 2008**

Level 3

The paper

The focus of the paper was on the use of a spreadsheet, word processing, graphics and mail merge skills. The paper provided a high number of level 3 skills and some aspects of the paper proved demanding for many candidates. The number of entries for the test was similar to those in the same series in previous years but the percentage pass rate was notably higher.

Task A

The majority of candidates attempted this task and most were able to import the data correctly although a few lost marks for not formatting the necessary cell range to 0 decimal points.

A number of candidates either did not address both formulas or did not produce a formula printout although it appeared that they had generated results. This was costly in terms of marks. The first formula was a fairly straightforward IF formula but quite a few candidates failed to use an absolute cell reference or were confused between 'greater than' and 'less than'. The generation of the VLOOKUP formula was quite well done by the majority; the main areas of concern related to the use of the whole table range and the use of absolute cell references. The latter invariably impacted on their ability to replicate.

Whilst a number of candidates successfully sorted the data, fewer were able to hide the required columns and several lost valuable marks because they did not include row and column headings. A proportion of candidates did not print the required cell range.

Task B

Candidates were able to import the data correctly with a few experiencing problems in setting the margins to the correct width. The majority were able to set the information into two columns and most were able to insert the vertical separator line appropriately. The graphic was generally appropriately positioned and adjusted to the correct size.

Using the find and replace facility seemed to cause a few problems and it was evident on occasions that the relevant words had simply been re-typed. Many candidates had not read the instructions carefully and all outcomes were in upper case. The alignment of the information using tabs gave varying results with noticeable difficulties in setting the final right tab. It was, however, encouraging to see that candidates are increasingly familiar with the use of decimal tabs.

The introduction and positioning of the merge fields was, on the whole, also well done. A few candidates used an address or greeting block and it was clear from the subsequent printouts that, on occasion, these did not include the fields as directed by the question paper. Marks continue to be lost for inappropriate spacing or for not addressing all the instances that required a merge field. A few failed to printout a copy of the unmerged letter and this impacted on the marks for the printout of the merged letters.

Most candidates were able to produce a printout of the selected letters required and only a handful printed copies of all the letters.

Task C

Candidates are reminded that a list of filenames is not acceptable. The test paper clearly states that the list of files must be in the form of a screen dump. Centres are reminded again that candidates must not have access to any other files during a test.

General Comments

An increasing number of papers are submitted in the wrong order. It is helpful if candidates put their papers together in Printout order.

If candidates are including pages that they do not wish to have marked it is helpful if these are put together at the back.

Recommendations to centres

Candidates should be able to produce all types of formulas required at Level 3 with particular emphasis on the IF statement and VLOOKUP formulas

Candidates need to recognise when it is appropriate to use an absolute cell reference

Candidates should be able to select specific areas of the spreadsheet for printing including gridlines, row and column heading on the printout

Practice is needed in setting margins and entering a separator line

Candidates should be familiar with the use of find and replace

Further practice is needed in the setting of merge fields

Impress upon candidates the need to follow the test instructions carefully and accurately

When papers are collected it is helpful if they are organised in Printout order.

Centres must ensure that candidates have fully covered the criteria set out in the key skill test specifications which can be found on the QCA website.

Chief Examiner