

Chief Examiner's Report - March Test Series – 2007

Information Communication Technology

Level 3

General Comments

The focus of the paper was on spreadsheet and database skills. There was a good range of level 3 skills across the tasks making it a challenging paper.

Entries for the test were similar to those for the same series last year, with the percentage pass rate proving comparable to, if not slightly higher than, similar tests.

Task A

The majority of candidates produced a printout of the table structure, although in a number of instances there was no evidence of the data itself actually being imported. Those candidates who imported the data successfully usually had the correct field names, although some had not set them and still had Field 1, Field 2 etc. Some candidates had not set the criteria correctly which meant that an ID field was included.

The correct validation rule caused problems for quite a number of candidates as it involved the inclusion of dates; many used a text string whilst others omitted one or other of the operands.

Many candidates were able to produce a report with the correct records. Others produced a variety of records as a result of an incomplete or incorrect query and this meant that some marks were lost. Other issues in the task focused on the inability to display the information fully whilst others found the addition of a correct title or the report footer to be a problem. Where grouping and sorting had been attempted it was usually done correctly, with the notion of ascending and descending order now seeming to be less of an issue.

Task B

Almost all candidates imported the data successfully into a spreadsheet although a few lost marks for not formatting all the necessary cell ranges to currency and 2 decimal points. The main formula required candidates to use a LOOKUP table, a task that, on the whole, was done quite well. Some candidates were totally familiar with the use of a LOOKUP; a few produced an alternative formula, for example using a nested IF statement. A number of candidates correctly used a named range rather than the table. Others generated an individual formula for each item but this meant that they did not always employ the full range required by the LOOKUP table.

When doing the IF formula, most candidates understood the principle but some did not use an absolute cell reference; again, some used a named cell which was equally effective. There were some problems with errors in both the logic and the THEN /ELSE. A few candidates had problems with the simple formulas, usually in relation to selecting the correct cell references.

Whilst a significant proportion of candidates produced the required print range many did not include row and column headings. Others gained a mark for row and column headings but did not print the required cell range. There were quite a few candidates who produced no formula printout at all.

Task C

Candidates are reminded that they may no longer use a list of filenames; the paper now states explicitly that a screen dump showing the filenames must be produced. Some candidates continue to lose marks because their files are presented as text files.

Centres are reminded again that candidates **must not** have access to other files during an exam.

Recommendations to centres

Candidates should be able to address all types of formulas required at Level 3 including the use of LOOKUP tables

Candidates need to be able to print a specified range showing row and column headings

Candidates should display the table setup in full

Practice is needed on validation rules using dates

Further practice is needed in entering the required criteria to produce a report

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

Centres are reminded that candidates should be encouraged to access the QCA data files for practice prior to sitting the tests

Centres are reminded that the QCA data should not be accessed by the candidate directly on the day of the test. The files should be downloaded prior to the test.

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

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