

Chief Examiner's Report March 2008

Information Communication Technology Level 3

General Comments

The test provided a good range of level 3 skills. The entry numbers were slightly higher than in March 2007 and the percentage pass rate was comparable. The focus of the paper was on a database and query followed by word processing skills, combined with the ability to import and position a graphic and to mail merge. Candidates responded well.

Task A

Candidates successfully imported the data and most were able to produce the table design or documenter showing correct field names although a few had included an additional ID field. Most were able to set the primary key and the logical fields at this point although the logical field was not always apparent in the subsequent printout.

The validation rule caused a few problems with some candidates using 'AND' instead of 'OR' whilst many used quotation marks rendering the rule inoperable.

A variety of records were produced for the query, although the majority managed the correct outcome. Others clearly had difficulty in using the correct search criteria with the result that the report contained either too many or too few records. Marks reflected the criteria that candidates had employed correctly. Most had selected the correct fields. Most are able to group and sort although a few still cannot differentiate between ascending and descending. A number of candidates continue to use a columnar presentation rather than presenting the results in columns.

Task B

The majority of candidates were able to import the text data correctly although the setting of the margin correctly was poor. All but a few were able to import the graphic, position it and resize it appropriately. The setting of tabs, including decimal tabs, was generally done well and there is a clear improvement in the candidates' ability to address this.

The introduction and positioning of merge fields was generally well done although some candidates used an address block which was not as directed by the question paper. As the requirements for merge fields were slightly different this did create problems for some candidates. Where it was clear from the subsequent printouts that fields were appropriately set marks were allocated. Some candidates lost marks for inappropriate spacing and quite a few did not manage to replace all the words with a merge field. A few failed to printout a copy of the unmerged letter which impacted on the marks for the printout of the merged letters. A very small number of candidates did not appear to be able to use mail merge.

The majority of the candidates were able to produce a printout of the selected letters required although a few simply printed copies of all the letters. Almost all were able to set up a new folder with the correct name and the correct file.

Task C

A small number of candidates continue to lose marks because their files do not clearly demonstrate the use of the appropriate software. Candidates are reminded that a simple list is no longer acceptable. The test paper specifies that the evidence of files saved must be in the

form of a screen dump. Centres are reminded once again that candidates should not have access to other files during an exam.

Recommendations to centres

The use of a logical field with specified records needs further practice

Candidates need more practice in the setting of validation rules

Candidates need to be able to produce a query using specified criteria

The difference between 'columns' and 'columnar' needs to be clarified

The setting of margins needs attention

Further practice is needed in the insertion merge fields

Candidates must be able to set up folders and files with the correct names

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

Centres should not allow candidates access to their other files in the course of an exam

Candidates need to 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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Information communication technology key skill