

General Comments

The test provided a range of level 3 skills. Candidates responded well and although the entry numbers were marginally lower than in November 2006, the percentage pass rate was constant. The focus of the paper was on a database and query followed by word processing skills and a mail merge.

Task A

Almost all candidates successfully imported the data and were able to produce the table design showing correct field names although a few had an additional ID field. The majority were able to set the primary key and the field size.

The validation rule caused a number of problems, with some candidates failing to use 'OR' and others enclosing the whole rule in inverted commas.

A variety of records was produced for the report, although many managed the correct outcome. Others had difficulty in using the correct search criteria, with the result that the report contained either too many or too few records. Some applied the criteria to one category only, whilst others failed to make the dates inclusive. Most had selected the correct fields. The ability to group and sort is improving although it continues to be an issue for a few.

Task B

With the odd exception, the majority of candidates imported the data correctly. Few were able to set the margins accurately, a task that should have proved straightforward. Some lost marks as they copied the address rather than moving it into the header. The setting of multiple tabs, including both centre and decimal tabs, was tackled with varying degrees of success, with the decimal tab generally proving the most challenging.

A very small number of candidates did not appear to be able to use mail merge but, apart from these few, the introduction and positioning of merge fields was well done. Some candidates used an address block which was not as directed by the question paper but it was clear from the subsequent printouts that fields were appropriately set. Some candidates lost marks for inappropriate spacing, whilst others did not manage to enter all the merge fields. A few failed to print out a copy of the unmerged letter, which impacted on the marks available for the printout of the merged letters.

Almost all candidates were able to produce a printout of the selected letters required but there were some who simply printed copies of all the documents. Candidates 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 setting of validation rules needs further practice

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

Further practice is needed in the setting of multiple tabs, particularly decimal tabs

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

Candidates need to have covered fully the criteria set out in the key skill test specifications which can be found on the QCA website.

Candidates must not have access to other files or folders on their computer system whilst carrying out a test

Chief Examiner
ICT key skill