

GNVQ Foundation ICT

Chief Moderator's Report
June 2006

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This report provides feedback on all the units moderated in the Summer 2006 series. Centres are encouraged to read previous Chief Moderator Reports as different issues are encountered in each series and a more comprehensive picture is achieved through a study of reports over a longer period of time. The portfolio guidance available in the GNVQ ICT section of the Edexcel website is also recommended.

Entries for GNVQ Information and Communication Technology (Foundation level) were about 20% below the level of June 2005. Much of the work presented was of good quality and on average over 90% of the work was correctly assessed against National Standards. In general candidates appeared to have been entered at a level appropriate to their knowledge, skills and understanding and it was apparent that only a very small minority of candidates might have benefited from acceleration to Intermediate level.

The profile of entries was predominantly that of candidates who were completing their course, with a significant number of candidates submitting portfolios for the first time. The most popular optional units continued to be Y106P (Graphics) and Y107P (Multimedia). It was evident that many centres had obtained a thorough understanding of the specification and assessment methodology through a systematic analysis of the feedback they had received from various sources. In these centres the following materials had been read, digested and incorporated into improvements in delivery and assessment practice:

- . • Centre Report following moderation
- . • Chief Moderator's Report
- . • GNVQ ICT section of the Edexcel website (portfolio guidance)

In addition a significant proportion of centres have benefited from the increased contact with their Moderator through the Online Support of Centre Assessment (OSCA) activities undertaken earlier in the academic year. These assessment activities, which operate outside the normal moderation windows, are to be repeated in the year 2006/2007 and centres are encouraged to participate so that they can receive additional feedback on their assessment decisions and practice.

In general the quality of centre administration was good, although several inconsistencies between the marks entered on the OPTEMs forms and the marks indicated on the actual portfolios submitted for moderation were reported. Most portfolios had been very well presented and organised in such a way that permitted the moderator to read the contents and find the necessary evidence with ease. The increased use of the standard Edexcel tracking sheets, which are designed to be page referenced to the candidates' evidence helped in this respect, although the tracking sheets were much less effective when used as a tick list without page references.

In a few instances incorrect samples were submitted, usually involving more than one example at below pass and/or omitting to include an available example assessed as achieving a points score of 7. Some samples were sent in very late, without any prior notification. Incorrect and late samples can seriously delay the moderation process and therefore put all results from these centres at risk.

Some excellent work was seen from centres. Teachers in these centres had ensured that assignments were written at an appropriate level, covered the full range of assessment criteria

and assisted candidates in achieving the grades they deserved through careful attention to the specification and accurate assessment. In a few instances, however, the rulings introduced by the Joint Council for General Qualifications over recent years continued to cause problems. The appendices added to previous Chief Moderator reports explain how the 'small parts rule' and 'compensation' can be applied in the assessment of GNQV ICT portfolios to determine the grade and points score that best fits the candidates' evidence. Centres who have any doubt over the correct application of these rules and / or allocation of points are urged to refer to these documents.

In a few centres the same problems seem to be recurring, no response having been made to the feedback given on a number of occasions by moderators. In these centres inappropriate assignments continue to be presented to candidates without adequate teaching of the 'What You Need to Learn' section of the specification. As a result, candidates failed to present sufficient suitable evidence to meet the criteria and even though a substantial amount of work had been undertaken generally failed to achieve a pass grade.

Criteria common to all units

It was disappointing to observe that there were still centres who were failing to address the criteria common to all units even though previous Chief Moderator Reports have outlined the same points - use of witness statements, backing up, meeting deadlines, checking accuracy, reviews /improvements etc. Explanations on all these points are repeated in the sections below and more detailed advice can be found on the Edexcel website under 'Portfolio Guidance - Generic Issues'.

Evidence and witness statements

There is very little in GNQV ICT that cannot be evidenced through screenshots, printouts, or written description / annotation and assessors should therefore avoid reliance on witness statements wherever possible. In the few instances where it is not possible to produce appropriate 'hard' evidence then witness statements can be used to support the candidates' work. These instances should not be centre specific and the statements should be individualised and explain exactly what the candidate has been seen to do. They should be signed and dated by the assessor. Witness statements should not be mass-produced photocopies of the same statement, nor should they be 'tick lists' without any written commentary.

Checking accuracy

The requirement to check work for accuracy occurs twice in most units - at pass grade and then again for one of the higher grades. At both levels there should be some explicit evidence that the work has been checked - both before and after evidence of changes being made, or a list of identified errors, or where the work produced is error free, narrative of the process of checking.

At Pass level candidates should be able to copy or key in data and make corrections. At this level a third party may identify the errors as long as the student is able to make any necessary changes for themselves. Where possible they should be able to use the spelling or grammar checker to identify mistakes.

At higher levels the candidates should be able to identify the mistakes for themselves (e.g. by using proofreading symbols) and correct obvious errors. At this level candidates would be looking to ensure that the data is fit for purpose. For example if the database holds records of client names and addresses then it should be suitable for possible use in a mail merge. They may also take steps to check that the formulae or queries they have constructed are correct e.g. by manual checking.

Annotations

Some candidates are still reluctant to write on their work. If candidates can write on their work why, how and what they have done they are providing evidence for higher grade criteria. Annotation can be handwritten on prints/screenshots, text boxes and arrows, or narrative, which refers to prints/screenshots. If candidates can use correct technical language in their explanations then they have an even better chance of a higher grade.

Standard ways of working

Most of the internally assessed units have a small section at the end of the WYNTL entitled 'standard ways of working'. A more detailed description of the requirements is given in unit 1 on pages 25-26 of the specification. It was noted that the majority of candidates are now adopting these disciplines and are using appropriate language in their portfolios and in the naming of their files. Many were providing appropriate evidence for regular saving of work, although clear evidence of the same files being saved in two locations was not always presented.

Foundation Unit 2 - Handling Information (Y102P)

The majority of the portfolios were of excellent quality with most candidates working well at this level. Assessment was found to be very accurate, with the highest level of agreement at moderation of all of the ICT units.

P1 - purpose, user needs

The majority of candidates effectively described the purpose of the database or spreadsheet in general terms. Most candidates were able to identify suitable sources for the required data, although vague statements referring to the Internet were commonplace.

P2 - suitable field lengths/data types

Weaker candidates tended not to explicitly define field lengths, or data types and relied solely on the table printouts to provide evidence for this criterion. The best evidence included screen prints of tables in design view showing that several fields had been considered.

P3, M1 - suitable row heights, column widths etc.

Many candidates presented clear evidence of formatting suitable row heights and column widths. When preparing formula printouts care needs to be taken to ensure that cell contents are not truncated, as assessors/moderators need to be able to see the entire formula/function to check if it has been correctly structured. Some greater attention should also be paid to ensuring page breaks are suitable for printouts.

P4 - Graphs and charts and what happens if...

Candidates should be encouraged to consider their selection of chart or graph types in relation to their data and complete the charts carefully to include suitable titles, axis labels and legends. Evidence of investigating what happens to output values when inputs are changed can best be evidenced in the spreadsheet, by editing the input data and seeing the changes in the cell containing a formula or function. Annotation can provide supporting evidence for D1.

M1, M2- use simple functions, multiple sorts, annotation and presentation

The requirement to produce a sort on multiple fields continued to cause difficulties. Often the data used did not provide opportunity to effectively demonstrate grouping on primary and secondary fields. In general the majority of the candidates work was

attractive and free from layout errors.

M3 - Checking of Accuracy

This builds on the checking as pass level, and needs to provide evidence of the progression outlined in the published portfolio guidance. This was not always the case.

M4, D1, D2 -Progression

Candidates, who had considered their initial designs in relation to user needs, generally were able to demonstrate clear progression. In these instances, the portfolios tended to be well organized and logically sequenced.

D3 - Searching using multiple criteria

The spreadsheet should provide opportunity for some meaningful use of formulae. Many searches based on combined criteria using AND, OR etc were noted and the criterion was achieved if these produced a meaningful outcomes.

Foundation Unit 3 - Hardware and Software (Y103P)

This unit continued to present some centres with difficulties, usually with the requirement to evidence the practical work required.

Banner, P5 - Setting up equipment

This unit requires candidates to produce 'an operational ICT system configured to meet user needs' (Banner) and to show the 'ability to work safely when setting up equipment' (P5). Page 50 of the specification explains how this unit might be delivered and previous Chief Moderator Reports have explained what evidence should be included in a candidate's portfolio. There must be some evidence that the candidates have set up a system i.e. they must have connected the hardware together and completed it safely.

The system configuration must be customised and appropriate to the specific needs of the user. Successful candidates provided good evidence for this by clearly stating specific user needs and describing how the system will need to be customised. They then went on to show that they have made the changes by presenting both before and after screen prints. Some candidates still show only the screen print after the changes and many still describe "how to" make the changes rather than showing that they have actually made the changes themselves for their stated client/user needs.

The safety aspect of this criterion was well evidenced in examples that included a written account by the candidate, supported by a detailed statement authenticated by the assessor. In some portfolios the candidates had stated Health & Safety Rules for working with computers and had not evidenced that they had themselves worked safely when setting up the equipment.

P1 - User needs. P2 and P3 - System configuration

Candidates must give a description of what the user needs the system to do. Many candidates produced details of hardware and software that had been taken directly from Internet websites without reference to any identified user. Better portfolios presented details of hardware and software in the candidates' own words related to the described needs. In these instances the configurations undertaken for P2 and P3 were also linked to the user needs stated in P1 as intended.

P2 - Directory-folder structures

The evidence produced to support the creation of suitable directory folders was often weak. Many candidates presented a single and sometimes unrelated individual new folder, whereas better candidates presented a series of nested folders renamed to be relevant to the requirements of the user.

P3 - Configuring applications software

Not all candidates showed that they had set up default file locations. Evidence of configuring the spelling and grammar checker was generally satisfactory, although a small number of candidates wrongly presented evidence of their use of the spell checker for this criterion.

P4 - Consumable materials

Many candidates provided suitable evidence for this criterion in the form of annotated photographs of them replenishing consumables, supported by detailed, signed witness statements by the assessor. In some instances the criterion was very weakly addressed with the centre assessor providing a tick box approach, often without any authenticating signature.

M1 - annotated copies of the macro and template...

The requirement to provide a useful macro and template was generally well covered, although the supporting annotations often did not clearly confirm their purpose.

M2 - efficient use of...

M2 looks for progression from P2 and P3 in terms of the configuration and candidates are expected to make additional changes to the configuration of the applications software and operating system (e.g. installing printer drivers). Some candidates presented good evidence, through the use of screen prints, of their meaningful use of an application help facility.

D1 - suggestions for improvement.

Some strong candidates failed to fully address the requirements of this criterion by omitting to put forward suggestions for improvements to their template and macro. These should be related to user efficiency and/or the quality of the output.

D2 - accurate template and macro that improve efficiency and effectiveness of users...

The more successful candidates clearly stated how the template and macro improved the efficiency for the user. They also stated how their actions ensured that the output was accurate and of high quality.

Foundation Unit 4 - Design Project (Y104P)

A small number of centres chose this optional unit. In general the candidates had selected appropriate projects and these had been planned, designed, developed and tested to an appropriate level. There was a high level of agreement with the assessment of this work at moderation.

Unit 6 - Graphics (Y106P)

Unit 6 remained a very popular optional unit. The majority of the graphics work submitted for moderation was of a good standard and assessment was found to be generally accurate. The majority of candidates presented more effective a bitmap-based graphics than vector drawings, with the wider availability of more sophisticated software enabling more purposeful photo editing.

Banner - number of images

Centres need to make sure that two images are created using vector-based tools and two images are created using bitmap-based tools. Candidates should clearly show the files they have created by screenshots of their folders showing the different file extensions. In a minority of cases the required second bitmap image had been omitted. This should be a developed original image and not just an imported photograph or similar.

P4, M3, D2 - complex images

Candidates are expected to import images using either scanners or digital cameras and clip art libraries. These should be amended and combined with other graphic elements to form a complex image for a specified purpose. Candidates should be learning how to ungroup and group, and select parts of images for use elsewhere. Candidates must evidence each stage of this process. In many cases the use of clip art was ill considered and did not enhance the final image.

M2 - dimensioning / repeated patterns

It is important to note that the portfolio should include drawings that show dimensions and an image comprising a pattern repeated at regular intervals. Where students had been taught using the same assignment as Intermediate students the requirement to include a repeated pattern tended to be overlooked.

Unit 7 - Multimedia (Y107P)

This unit was the most popular optional unit this series. Overall the work submitted for this unit was of an appropriate level. Many centres had given candidates the opportunity to use different types of multimedia packages and the most effective portfolios tended to comprise both web pages and slideshow presentations.

Banner - Two presentations

Some candidates omitted to include evidence of their group's presentation. It is essential that both presentations be evidenced in each individual portfolio.

P1, P2, M2, M4, D2 - Planning, designing and testing

Many candidates produced good quality storyboards that helped with the implementation of the presentations. In a few cases the storyboards had been produced retrospectively and were of little value. At merit level the storyboard should show clear proposals for user interaction and define timing and transitions. Good quality annotations and explanations can raise attainment in these criteria.

P1, M1 - contribution to group work

There has been an improvement in the recording of individual contribution to group work. Minutes of team meetings, descriptions of individual roles or a report detailing individual involvement were included to support M1. There was also more evidence of annotations highlighting the contribution made by the individual within the group presentation as advised in previous moderator reports.

D3- Good understanding of different types of software

Many centres had provided their candidates with the opportunity to use different types of software to produce their presentations. In these instances the candidates tended to be able to demonstrate the level of understanding required to effectively address this criterion.

Unit 8 - Preparing for employment (Y108P)
Unit 9 - Working as part of a team (Y109P)

These units were the least popular of the optional units, although unit 8, in particular, did produce several excellent portfolios and appears to have provided the candidates with useful experience. For both units there was a high level of agreement with the centre assessments.