Moderation Feedback – Central - 2005

Assessment Panel:	**Computing and Information Systems**
Qualification area	
Subject(s) and Level(s) included in this report	**Intermediate 1 Computing Studies, Intermediate 2, Higher and Advanced Higher Computing.**

General comments on moderation activity

This year's moderation activity covered both old and revised courses, although the number of centres moderated who were presenting candidates for old courses was negligible.

The separate specified courseworks for Intermediate 1, 2 and Higher were welcomed by the moderating team. The overall impression was that with all candidates at a particular level attempting the same piece of work, it should be much easier to maintain standards across schools.

However, it was also noted that, in a few centres, candidates appeared to have been given too much direction. Centres must accept that the coursework should be the candidate's own work, carried out under controlled conditions and that any specific help given should be acknowledged in the marking of the submission.

The general level of submission at all levels was fair to good with only eight centres being 'Not Accepted'. Moderators were in agreement that, in this first year of the revised courses, only extreme problem centres would be labeled in this way. Minor difficulties were dealt with by providing detailed feedback along with a recommendation that the centre be recalled for moderation in 2006.

A few centres of excellence were highlighted as being possibilities for exemplar materials or moderator training materials.

Specific issues identified

Centres appeared to have understood the procedures associated with the revised courses. The fact that the coursework is now a separate entity, with no direct bearing on NABs, is most welcome after the many years of confusion, especially within the Higher course.

Feedback to centres

At the end of the first year of delivering the revised courses the moderating team would like to give centres as much information as possible as to how they carried out the scrutiny of materials. The details below reflect the moderators' discussions:

Intermediate 1

Stage 1	Scanning, OCR and speech recognition were all accepted as methods of capturing the text. The required hardware device would then be either scanner or microphone.
Stage 2	If candidates describe the text being 'captured' using a keyboard, they were only awarded 1 mark. To be considered for the 2 possible marks, they had to describe the use of the scanner or speech recognition.
Stage 3	Marks for this stage were not adjusted by moderators.
Stage 4	Spell checker or grammar checker were considered appropriate responses.
Stage 5	Moderators examined the printout of the file for errors to confirm that Stage 4 had been carried out.
Stage 6	Evidence of a meaningful filename was required.
Stage 7	A print out must have been included.
Stage 8	Candidates were asked to 'describe' how to cut and paste but since only one mark is available, moderators accepted just 'cut and paste' as an answer.
Stage 9	The final printout was checked to see that Stage 8 had been carried out successfully.
Stage 10	Moderators queried just how simple this logo could in fact be. Candidates were given no guidance and so any design was accepted.
Stage 11	Moderators would have liked to have seen Bit-mapped and Vector/Object Oriented graphics as the two types of package but accepted Painting and Drawing packages as valid answers.
Stage 12	Candidates may choose either package type (a specific package name is not acceptable) but the reason must link to the capabilities of what they have chosen.
Stage 13	Moderators examined the printout of the logo for a good match with the design.
Stage 14	Evidence of a meaningful filename was required.
Stage 15	A printout must have been included.
Stage 16	The only file type excluded from what was deemed acceptable was bitmap.
Stage 17	Marks were awarded according to the quality of the description.
Stage 18	The marks for carrying out the scan were not moderated. Evidence of a meaningful filename was required. A sensible file size was expected.
Stage 19	An indication of the design of each of the three pages was required. These designs should have shown fonts, sizes, styles, colours etc. and should have been clearly laid out
Stage 20	Moderators checked final printouts as evidence
Stage 21	Evidence of a meaningful filename was required.
Stage 22	All printouts must have been included.

Intermediate 2

Part 1

Candidates would have been well advised to include source documents or references such as printouts of web pages, URLs, photocopies of magazine adverts used while answering the sections on monitors and digital cameras. Candidates who provided nothing but printouts of web pages were awarded a maximum of 1 mark for the 'monitors' section and a maximum of 1 for the 'cameras' section.

Task 1	Moderators were looking for candidates to distinguish between the CRT and LCD/TFT monitors, clearly stating the maximum resolutions and costs. This should have been written in their own words to show that they understood the source documents.
Task 2	Moderators were looking for candidates to distinguish between two digital cameras, clearly stating the resolutions, costs and special features. This should have been written in their own words to show that they understood the source documents.
Task 3	The justifications given for the choices of monitor and camera should, ideally, have related to the needs of the Youth Group and the project they were to undertake.
Task 4	Moderators did not accept floppy drive, (internal)hard drive or CDROM drive as answers but did accept CD-R/W, DVD-R/W, flash drive, portable hard drive or zip drive.
Task 5	The marks here were awarded for the justification, not the name of the device.

Part 2

Task 1	The first and third parts were very similar. In each case the candidate must have shown sensible conditions for testing the values input. Loop structures, although desirable, were not essential as these parts were only worth 1 mark. The second part required candidates to outline the complex condition needed to identify the membership type. The final (fourth) part had to show the formula needed to calculate the amount to pay.
Task 2	The algorithm suggests that a fixed loop should be used to print out the guest cards. In some HLLs, this would not necessarily be the natural way to code this. Moderators were advised not to penalise candidates who tackled the problem using alternative methods.
Task 3&4	Moderators questioned what was actually meant by a 'set' of test data, e.g. would it be sufficient to test one valid Junior member as a 'set' of normal data or should the 'set' of test data include a member at each level? It was agreed to accept the former interpretation although the latter was the preferred option. Candidates were asked to provide a table of test results but moderators would have preferred to have seen actual output or screen dumps.

Higher

Part 1

Task 1	The specification did not ask for input validation to be built in to the design and this is not expected at Stage 2. Moderators expected to see a list of the five quantities to be input with data flow clearly shown, at all stages. Stage 3 required a formula to calculate the file size. Stage 4 required, preferably, a loop or similar structure or series of conditional statements to convert the file size to appropriate units. Stage 5 required to show the string handling necessary to arrive at the filename.
Task 2	Although the top level algorithm given to candidates suggested that a conditional loop had to be used this would not necessarily be the natural approach in certain HLLs. To allow for this, moderators decided that programs would be required to have a prompt which would clarify whether or not further graphics were to be processed. All reasonable ways of doing this would be accepted.

Tasks 3, 4 & 5 Very many candidates did not provide an initial listing and a final listing with changes highlighted. Depending on the approach to programming it might not be possible to do this, and it would not be desirable to expect candidates to contrive listings with errors. It might have been worthwhile to ask candidates to test with supplied test data which would have led them towards the need for error trapping and then to have asked them to provide their own test data for the final testing.

Part 2

Candidates were expected to recognise that the systems chosen should have:

- an absolute minimum 512MB RAM. Better candidates would probably realise that more than this would really be necessary to allow for documents to be created as well as the various packages being loaded simultaneously
- either USB2, Firewire or Firewire2 interfaces
- a network card

as well as the 17" display and minimum 1.6GHz processor stated

Candidates were free to recommend any solid state storage device of 128MB or more. Memory cards were acceptable but if they were recommended the actual systems must have card readers.

Candidates are asked to consider using both a hub and a switch to set up a client-server network. The device chosen would require a minimum of 11 ports — ten for the workstations and one for the server. It was noted that some candidates opted for several small hubs which, although a strange approach, was given partial credit, provided the total number of ports was suitable.

The sections that required candidates to look at the advantages of desktop/laptop systems appeared to be interpreted in different ways. Some centres took this to mean that candidates were expected to compare desktop with laptop, others that the comparisons should be with the old system. Both approaches were accepted.

The justifications for:

- choice of computer system
- choice of solid state removable storage device
- choice of hub/switch

had to relate back to the client's needs. In addition, the choice of hub/switch had to clearly show that the candidate fully appreciated the differences between the two.

General Issues

Several samples showed evidence of materials marked by different people. Where a centre is in this position, internal verification should be carried out to ensure the same standards have been applied to all candidates.

The marking schemes for the new coursework tasks suggest that partial credit can be awarded where candidates have been given some help. The moderation exercise is made much easier if marking grids are annotated to show where this has happened and what help has been given. The more information the marker can provide to support the decisions made, the better.