National Qualifications 2006

Senior Moderator Report

Subject: Information Systems

Assessment Panel: Computing and Information Systems

The purpose of this report is to provide feedback to centres on moderation which has taken place within National Qualifications in this subject.

COMPONENT / COURSEWORK IN NATIONAL COURSES

COMPONENT/COURSEWORK MODERATED

Intermediate 2, Higher and Advanced Higher Coursework Tasks

FEEDBACK TO CENTRES

General comments:

At the central moderation event for Int2 and Higher, there were a very high number of centres not accepted. Over 50% of centres were not accepted, although a significant number were not accepted at one level only.

In general, it was definitely the Using Information sections across both Higher and Int 2 that were leniently marked. The Database section was in general, accurately and fairly marked. The main problems came from candidates not relating their answers to the scenario or the task stated. They tended to write generic responses where they put down everything they knew e.g. on operations, HCI, software and upgrade strategies, etc instead of tying their answers tightly to the scenario that was given.

Visiting moderation for Advanced Higher continues to be very successful indeed. Centres truly appreciate the visit and gain a great deal from the feedback and discussions with the visiting moderator. All AH centres were accepted after discussion with the visiting moderator on the marks awarded by the centre.

Advice on good practice and areas for further development:

Int2

Part 1: Using Information

The major problem with the Int2 coursework task was the lenient marking (and in some cases, extremely lenient marking) in Part 1 with tasks 1, 2 and 3. The tasks state that candidates have to evaluate the **suitability** of their chosen word processing application and one other type of application to produce the magazine page in terms of two data objects required, three operations required and the HCI.

The main issue was that candidates were not relating their responses to the actual task and the scenario they were given. They managed to identify the data objects but tended to give very poor responses for the three operations and the HCI. Moderators were looking for candidates to give three clearly visible operations which were evident from the magazine article. Most candidates tended to write about any three operations which did not relate to the magazine article. Moderators also did not accept operations such as cut, copy, paste or spell check as these are not visibly evident from the magazine article.

The same goes for HCI. Candidates wrote about HCI in generic terms without evaluating the suitability of the application to produce the magazine in terms of the HCI. To put it quite simply, they did not relate their answers to the scenario which they had to do to in order to obtain the marks.

Problems were also identified in task 3 where candidates, having considered suitable software for this system, had to describe why there would be a need for a software strategy and an upgrade strategy. Here candidates tended to write a definition of these strategies without describing why there would be a **need** for

them. Again, very few answers related to the system in question which was the software used to produce the magazine.

Part 2: Databases

This section was more accurately and consistently marked than Part 1. However, there were a few instances of lenient marking. Candidates had to create a table in task 1 to which 2 marks were allocated. As there were only 6 records to input, moderators felt that the table had to be 100% accurate for the 2 marks. One mark was deducted for 1 error which did include incorrect spelling and incorrect use of case.

The other issue here was that in task 1, candidates had to set up the Profit Last Year (£) field as a number and display it as a number. Later on, in task 9 they have to amend this field to display the contents as currency. Many candidates displayed this as currency from the start and were awarded the marks.

In general, the moderation team felt they were being quite lenient in what they decided they were willing to accept and a tolerance factor of 2 out of a total mark of 30 was agreed which was in line with Int2 Computing.

Higher

Part 1: Using Information

In task 1 the main issue again was that candidates were giving generic reasons about software functionality and usability without relating it to the actual newsletter published.

Where most centres tended to be very lenient was in tasks 3 and 4. Candidates were asked to produce articles on personal information and security issues related to the scenario. Typical responses were again very generic and not related, for example, to how TriScot would ensure that the accessing and downloading of data from their website is kept secure. Centres also leniently marked the part on legal implications. Moderators were looking for the legal consequences of not abiding by the principles of the Data Protection Act whereas most centres accepted consequences or implications that were not related to the legal aspect of the Act.

In task 5, the moderators accepted any clearly labelled, appropriate chart but for the part relating to presentation tables, they were looking for all 4 sets of figures to be represented. The task states that candidates must present the figures quoted in a more readable format. Many centres accepted just one or two figures, but moderators insisted on all 4 sets for 2 marks and three sets for 1 mark.

Part 2: Relational Databases

In general, this section was accurately and fairly marked by centres. Minor issues with task 8 (b) where the evidence required was a printout of layout/form and script/macro. Many candidates did not provide evidence of the script or macro. Other minor issues related to task 9(a) where candidates did not display the correct fields yet were awarded full marks. The most common error here was to include the Team No. or Team Name which was not required.

A tolerance of 5 out of a total mark of 60 was agreed for the Higher coursework task which, again, was in line with Higher Computing.

Advanced Higher

Centres really appreciate the visiting moderation model used for Advanced Higher. It gives the centres the opportunity to discuss and agree on how marks should be awarded to the project. Teachers receive invaluable advice and support on what is expected as the national standard for the project which in turn will help them significantly in the marking of projects of future candidates.

However, the following advice should continue to be adhered to by centres presenting Advanced Higher:

1. Ensure there is evidence for every requirement of the marking scheme.

2. Ensure complexity of the task, particularly relating to the processes involved in the task and the design of the user interface, is at AH level.

3. Advise candidates to include the process of normalisation and check it has been carried out correctly.
4. Check E/R diagram reflects the normalised data model.

5. The design in relation to normalisation and E/R diagrams should reflect the whole database system and not individual sub systems which have been normalised and E/R diagrams created independently of the other entities.

6. Ensure there is evidence of design of tables, relationships, forms, reports, queries, macros, where appropriate to the task.

7. Ensure the user interface is designed using a different tool or application to the one used for implementation. In other words, if the chosen application to produce the database system is Access then the design of the user interface should not be done using Access but using another application or design tool.

8. Ensure the design of the user interface is carried out prior to implementation and not screen shots of the interface which has already been implemented.

9. Time allocation should be a plan of how long is to be spent on each activity, not a progress diary of how long was spent on each activity.

10. Advise candidates to supply as much evidence as possible of a working solution. This can be done with the use of screen shots to demonstrate the testing that has been carried out.

11. Use the marking scheme and commentary of the two AH projects supplied on the "Exemplification of Standards" CD as a benchmark on which to base your own assessment of your candidates' AH projects.

Recommendations

The Coursework Task is intended to give candidates the opportunity to apply their Knowledge and Understanding to a complex context. Centres should only award full marks where candidates have related their answers to the context of the task.

The sample Coursework tasks, which are contained in the Course Assessment Packs for each level, include sample solutions which indicate suitable levels of response.