AQA

**General Certificate of Secondary Education
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Business and Communication Systems

413009

(Specification 4134)

Unit 9: Using ICT in Business

Report on the Examination

General

It was clear from their responses that the paper was accessible to students of all levels, while presenting opportunities for differentiation and challenge. Of the two main aspects of the tasks, the majority of students were able to carry out the technical parts, but it was the communication element that proved more difficult. There were examples in every question part of occasions where students had not read the question sufficiently carefully. The importance of training students to check thoroughly that they have followed all instructions exactly and entered all text accurately cannot be emphasised too greatly.

Task One – Poster

(a)   Although most students were able to correct the e-mail address, a surprising number did not.

(b)   Almost all students completed this part of the task; most placed the UK Fit logo at the top of the page or at the bottom; a very small number opted for a random position in the middle of the other information on the page.

(c)   Only a very small number of students did not make any change to the UK Fit slogan, but a significant number chose to use exactly the wording in the instructions. These students were given credit for making the change, but could not access the additional marks allocated for following the instructions. Many students included only one of the three aspects of UK Fit's remit. The best students followed the instructions completely and produced wording with customary brevity that could realistically be adopted. However, many students made their slogans much longer than would be appropriate.

(d)   Some students did not make any change to the order of the phrases on the poster and consequently could not be awarded any marks. Students who made any change to the order of the phrases were rewarded. Higher marks were the reward for posters where the phrases were in a logical order. Some also changed the appearance of the poster so that rather than being in a list, the phrases were in text boxes arranged in the central area of the poster; this approach was also rewarded with a mark for making the change and marks for the logical order of the phrases.

(e)   Most students selected the two images that represented UK Fit's healthy lifestyle message; a few chose to include one or both of the other images to communicate their message. It is important that students consider the placement of images carefully so that they contribute to the effectiveness of the document.

(f)   Students used a range of formatting tools to change the appearance of their posters. Weaker students limited their changes to text formatting; others made changes to the objects on the page by using tools such as shading and borders or by adding shapes. Some relied extensively on the use of WordArt for all text items; this practice is not representative of business communication and students should be persuaded against this approach. It is important that the formatting that students choose is fit for both audience and purpose. Examiners were pleased to see that many made good use of the space available and produce posters that could be read from a distance and would attract attention.

Task Two – Database

(a)   While most students made the required change to the data item, a number did not make the change.

(b)   Almost all students were able to add the record to the file; a few made an error in the data entry and did not gain the mark available for accuracy. A significant number of students were not able to print in landscape.

(c) It was clear that most students were able to search the database based on two criteria. However, the task also asked them to search the type field for "Fruit". Most were able to print showing only the required fields. There were students who attempted this by cropping a screen shot. Some did not submit the search results in table format, choosing instead to submit just the report version for part (e); this was acceptable and marks were awarded based on that print out for both task parts.

(e) The task provided the title for the report, but many did not ensure its accuracy. Most students submitted either a database report or a word processed report and included the data from part (c); both approaches were awarded marks. It was clear that many were able to produce the database report effectively.

(h) Marks for this task part were divided into two sections: firstly for the ability to use e-mail and secondly for the quality of the judgements they made in the message and the quality of their written communication. Students were expected to use the placeholder to add a subject to the message, to indicate how to contact the sender of the report by giving an appropriate name or contact details, to include the data from the database and to structure the message in paragraphs. Most students demonstrated that they could include these features and scored well in this area.

Examiners saw a range of responses from excellent e-mail messages that were well-written and well-structured to sparse messages that were not suitable examples of business communication. A number of students "topped and tailed" their messages as if they were letters. The best examples included an introductory paragraph, a paragraph about the information requested by Mrs Smith and a closing paragraph that promised further help and indicated how to access it. Many inventive students also added additional information from the database that could be useful and referred to the wider range of foods that are high in fibre and/or vitamin C. Rather than including the data in the message, there were students who opted to refer to attaching the report; this demonstrated clear application of their knowledge to the context of the task and was rewarded.

Task Three – Creating the website home page

(a) Almost all students were able to complete the navigation bar. However, some were not totally accurate.

(b) This straightforward task was completed by almost all; the majority correctly copied their slogan from Task One. In the work of a few students, the differences between the two versions of their slogan showed that the copy and paste tool would have proved valuable.

(c) Students are competent at formatting text and most chose styles appropriate for a web page. The majority were able to format items other than the text; many added shading to the text boxes and the navigation buttons, while others changed the colour and weight of the borders or rounded the corners. Practising these techniques would enable students to use them with greater confidence. On occasions the text was difficult to read either due to the choice of font, the contrast or the choice of colours. It is vital that students check that the final document is clear before it is finished and submitted.

(d) The instructions for the web designer provided students with an opportunity to explain their understanding of the two techniques. Most successfully identified and explained suitable hyperlinks. However, many were less certain about the use of animation. A few students attempted to explain how to add animations and hyperlinks; the web developer would have known how to carry out such tasks.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the Results statistics page of the AQA Website.

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