



General Certificate of Secondary Education

Business and Communication Systems 3126

Higher Tier 3126/2H

Report on the Examination

2008 examination - June series

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Higher Tier – Controlled Test (3126/2H)

General

Candidates usually attempted all the tasks but sometimes missed out the questions involving evaluation at the end. Even when these tasks were attempted the resulting marks were low. Candidates found it difficult to review their work or describe the significance of data.

It is important for candidates to spend five minutes reading through the paper before starting to work. This is time well spent as an understanding of the background to the questions really helps to gain marks. It is also important to looking at the total marks for each question on the front cover and then to spend more time on those with the greater number of marks. Candidates can also sometimes help themselves by looking at the marks awarded to different parts of the tasks. Thus Task 1 (a) (iv) was allocated two marks, therefore there should be two elements to the layout, eg centred style and bullet points.

Invigilators should be reminded that candidates' print outs should be inserted into the stationery folder in task order. It is important for candidates to check that all their print outs are included. Large centres should be particularly careful to ensure that all the printouts for each task are included in the folder. There is no need to use treasury tags, string, staples or paper clips to attach print outs to the stationery folders as it is time consuming for examiners to remove these for marking.

Task One

This task was reasonably well answered. Almost all candidates realised that the font had to be simple and most corrected the two spelling errors, though 'evens', which was not likely to be found by a spell check, was sometimes missed. The requirement for the advertisement to include all necessary information (including a title) proved more difficult and some candidates added nothing. The contact address was usually inserted but often nothing else including any additional information about the business, eg its name (A H Garages).

Most candidates were able to use formatting tools effectively, eg additional line spacing between sections, though some failed to gain the marks for emphasising the key points either by emphasising too much or by failing to emphasise the business name (AHG Racing was accepted). Candidates who had first hand knowledge of the format and contents of a job advertisement in a newspaper would have found this a straightforward task.

Task Two

Candidates are by now used to creating a database from data provided in the question paper. Many were able to think of five acceptable additional field headings. Some struggled to find sufficient data topics for their fields, often resorting to sub-divisions of location, invented information or fields entitled 'Other'. All these responses made it less likely that significant marks could be gained.

Candidates were less successful in inputting the data, sometimes finding it difficult to convey its sense without exceeding the maximum limit of four words per field entry. Weaker candidates often failed to code the location information.

Candidates were less successful at sorting or searching their databases. They often did not realise that it was not necessary to print all fields in Question 2 (d) (ii) though the mark for sorting the records could still be obtained. Often the searched data lacked a title; perhaps evidence that the creation of reports in Access is still a problem.

The answers to Question 2 (f) were very disappointing, the average candidate failing to gain half of the available marks. Despite the fact that candidates had just thought through the problems of structuring a database, many were unable to reflect on and describe what they had done. A substantial minority repeated the guidance given in the question.

Task Three

On average, candidates gained about half the marks allocated for creating the letter layout, in Question 3 (a) (i). Incorrect formats for the date or the closure, (eg 'Yours Sincerely') were common errors. Ed Miller often lacked a title and sometimes the business name was also missing. However, the content of the letter often gained most of the allocated marks.

To answer Question 3 (b), candidates needed to have a basic knowledge of mail merge and be able to apply this to the letter they had just created. In practice, many candidates displayed neither the knowledge nor the understanding and often just repeated the guidance given to them in the question. However, a minority of candidates did very well.

Task Four

Most candidates got well over half the marks allocated to Questions 4 (a), (b) and (c). The commonest errors were to calculate the number of litres needed per stage incorrectly (multiplying rather than dividing the 'Length of the stage' by the 'Miles per litre') and to key in the figures for fuel 'At the start of the stage' rather than using a formula. Candidates who miscalculated the 'Fuel needed per stage' often lost only one mark as the own figure rule was followed if their subsequent calculations were correct.

Candidates did not do so well in Question 4 (d). Most gained the mark for shading a cell, but sometimes failed to get the second mark by shading the incorrect one. Almost all candidates gained some of the marks allocated for calculating the effect of re-fuelling.

Task Five

Most candidates gained reasonable marks in Question 5 (a) (i) for creating the chart. Again the own figure rule was followed if the correct data set was chosen when the values in it were wrong. As usual errors centred around charting either more than one or the incorrect data set or choosing an inappropriate title. Far fewer candidates were able to complete successfully Question 5 (a) (ii) by identifying the stage where the car would need re-fuelling. Even candidates who identified the wrong stage could still potentially gain marks for the use of arrows, labels, shading, etc.

Answers to question 5 (b) were very disappointing. Few candidates came up with a suitable subject for the email (eg 'The advantages and disadvantages of charts') and many got Alan Honess's email address wrong. The potential advantages of a chart as a clear pictorial reminder were sometimes touched upon. Despite having gone through the process of creating and labelling a chart, few appreciated that it might be considered an over complex response and that Alan would be far better off creating a short warning notice. Most candidates could not suggest an alternative type of *document* (usually failing to realise that the word had a specialist meaning), instead referring to the use of spreadsheets or databases.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.