

**GCSE**

**Business and Communication Systems**

General Certificate of Secondary Education **J230**

**OCR Report to Centres June 2014**

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This report on the examination provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding of the specification content, of the operation of the scheme of assessment and of the application of assessment criteria.

Reports should be read in conjunction with the published question papers and mark schemes for the examination.

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#### OCR REPORT TO CENTRES

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## A265 Businesses and their communication

### General Comments

This paper and the responses given by candidates continued a pattern seen in recent sessions. Candidates generally have a reasonably good understanding of most aspects of the specification; however, they often struggled with the more complex technical content (eg how firewalls operate or the features of a public limited company which are different from a private limited company). Discussion of the business impact of the systems used and decisions made by the organisation was also limited.

It was, however, pleasing to see that centres had prepared their candidates well for the examination and there were very few instances of the responses focussing on 'professionalism' or the other weak approaches referred to in last year's report to centres.

One notable tendency this year was the willingness of candidates to attempt to discuss business impact in terms of impact on profit but being generally limited in detailed analysis of how this impact arises. Rather than asserting that the need to hire a web designer will reduce profits there should be an attempt to explore at least the short-term impact of this on costs, and then possibly the longer-term impact on both costs and revenue if their work is successful. This failure to analyse the impact often resulted in many lengthy responses achieving only a mark in Band 1 or the bottom of band 2. An appreciation of the context of the question and the organisation is also important in enabling the response to offer valid judgements which are a requirement of the highest mark band.

### Comments on Individual Questions

#### Question No.

- 1a Most candidates gained full marks on this part of the question but a common error was to circle cranberry.
- 1b Most candidates recognised that checking documents for errors would take time but very few were able to explain why this would be a problem for the business.
- 1c Most candidates possessed the knowledge required to gain full marks on this part of the question.
- 1d Most candidates could identify two relevant hardware or software features and most of them were then able to explain their relevance to editing a photograph.
- 2ai A number of candidates struggled to do more than repeat the question; however, most candidates gained a mark for recognising that cutting prices made the product cheaper and, therefore, more attractive customers but few gave more detail such as being cheaper than competitors and encouraging existing customers to purchase greater quantities or new customers to switch from competitors.
- 2aii Most candidates recognised that there would be an impact on revenue or profits but very few offered more by, for example, explaining the link between the two or exploring the impact on revenue of sales increasing by less than 20%.
- 2aiii Most candidates could offer at least one valid promotional activity and many offered two. Weaker responses suggested a lack of understanding of the term 'promotion'.

- 2b Most candidates did reasonably well by demonstrating an understanding of customer service and how it influences the opinion of customers about the business. Few then went on to discuss how this impacted on competitiveness.
- 2c Most candidates offered relevant knowledge of how a customer survey could capture useful information. Fewer then went on to describe how the business could then use this information.
- 2d Most candidates offered at least one valid method and many offered two. Weaker responses demonstrated a lack of understanding of different types of customer survey as these were then offered in response.
- 3a Nearly all of the candidates achieved full marks on this part of the question. The main incorrect response being Personnel/Human Resources.
- 3b Candidates generally had at least some understanding of hierarchical organisations. The best answers (which easily gained full marks) recognised that there were many layers to the organisation, described at least three layers and discussed implications in terms of span of control/chain of command and communication flows.
- 3c Responses were generally less effective than on the previous part of the question. Many responses suggested that flat structures have no layers and everyone is on the same level. Good responses discussed how flat structures compare with hierarchical ones in terms of number of layers, chain of command/span of control and communication flows.
- 3d Nearly all candidates had some knowledge of a public limited company in terms of wider share ownership. Most then recognised the implication of this for access to finance. Very few candidates then developed this into an analysis of the impact on the organisation in terms of investment/expansion. A number of candidates discussed limited liability concerns which were made irrelevant by the question and its context.
- 4a Many candidates saw this question as an opportunity to rehearse knowledge of data protection legislation and thus gained no marks. Those who responded to the reference to consumer protection in the question were generally able to score two or three marks.
- 4b Most candidates gained one or two marks for recognising the requirement to keep data secure. Good responses then went on to offer one or two other correct implications but very few were able to correctly explain all three implications. A common incorrect response was to state aspects of the legislation incorrectly – for example by asserting that it is illegal to share data with other organisations or even to allow it to leave the country. Neither is it illegal to sell data to other organisations. In some cases these practices are legal if the data subject gives their permission.
- 4c Most candidates had at least some relevant knowledge of what constitutes operating in an ethical and socially responsible manner and so achieved a mark in Level 1. Some candidates offered some relevant analysis, for example by exploring the impact on either revenues or costs.
- 5ai Most candidates gave a valid device.
- 5aii Most candidates recognised that having the back-up data in the same location as the primary data was a risk but few give offered either a detailed explanation of this risk or could offer a second valid implication. Many candidates demonstrated a lack of understanding of how back-up data is stored by suggesting it was at risk from Internet or even network-based attacks.

- 5b A surprisingly large number candidates offered 'username' and/or 'password' rather than a method which would restrict physical access.
- 5c Very few candidates had more than the most basic knowledge of what a firewall is or how it can protect data. Common misconceptions included:
- it is expensive to purchase and install
  - it is expensive to maintain
  - it requires constant updates
  - it protects against all viruses
  - it will prevent all unauthorised access to a computer system
  - it protects against phishing.

Consequently very few candidates were able to offer valid analysis of its usefulness to an organisation.

- 6ai Most candidates gained the mark available for this part of the question.
- 6aii Many candidates knew that a cookie in some way enabled a website to 'recognise' a visitor but few offered a development of how this is of benefit to the visitor. Some candidates gave benefits to the website and so gained no marks.
- 6b Many candidates did not know the significance of https, some of whom incorrectly guessed that it was a plural of http. Candidates who recognised that it offered security when entering personal data gained both marks.
- 6c Most candidates offered two valid drawbacks; although weaker responses misunderstood the question and gave drawbacks of using a smartphone more generally.
- 6d Most candidates offered two valid methods – the most common responses being 'smartphone app', 'smartphone version of the website' and 'optimise existing website for smartphone users'.
- 6e Most candidates gave relevant knowledge – typically the actions which would need to be undertaken to achieve the outcomes identified in question 6(d), but very few offered an analysis of the impact of these actions.

# A266 Developing Business and Communication Systems

## General Comments

This is the fifth assessment of this unit and the marks awarded are about what would be expected. The controlled assessment is aimed at candidates at all levels and the breadth of marks awarded suggests that it was accessible to all candidates.

The number of candidates who chose each of the set tasks was very nearly balanced this year and in some cases candidates from the same centre were seen to be split between both of the Tasks unlike previous years where whole centres had chosen to go down the one task route.

As was mentioned in the report last year this is a controlled assessment and centres should still bear in mind that only the work which was completed within the time limit should be submitted, additional work that was completed as part of the investigation is not necessarily required but needs to be used when writing the report. There is a recommended limit on the number of words within the report, 2000 words, and centres should refer to pages 28 and 29 of the specification. Centres should also note that any work attached as appendices by the candidates should be included in the body of the report in the required section and not attached as an appendix. In some cases candidates have not even referenced the appendix in the main body of the report.

For Scenario 1, many candidates used different travel agencies as their resource, including larger Internet based ones such as 'Thomson'. Candidates still found some difficulty in analysing in detail and justifying their recommendations but there has been a vast improvement in this aspect over the past sessions. This has meant that more candidates were able to obtain marks into Band 2 with a larger proportion gaining marks in Band 3. The letter (document) was generally well laid out and in many cases only needed a few minor improvements thus gaining many candidates marks in Band 3. However candidates still tend to list the recommendations and do not make a sufficient attempt to try and 'sell' these recommendations to the stakeholders in order to gain marks into Band 3 for the content part of Task 2

For Scenario 2 many candidates were able to use a local hotel and/or country club and in this case many used local hotels as their resource. As for Task 1 many candidates still found some difficulty in analysing in detail and justifying their recommendations but again there has been an improvement over the past sessions. This has meant that more candidates obtained marks into Band 2, with a larger proportion gaining marks in Band 3. The leaflets tended to be bright, colourful and well laid out, but again they did not always sell the recommendations to the stakeholders. However it was noted that, for this session, numerous centres had appeared to misinterpret the term leaflet and candidates had produced posters and single sheet flyers which contained little or no text and information.

Centres completed all of the paperwork accurately and the required samples were generally dispatched quickly. Centres should make sure that controlled assessment cover sheets (CCS309) are checked for arithmetic errors so that candidates are not penalised. It is always useful to see where centres have awarded marks on each individual piece of coursework and many centres have adopted the approach of annotating the scripts. It is hoped that this approach will continue to be adopted by all centres in the future.

For both scenarios, the application of the assessment criteria by individual centres was generally good. Some centres, however, did err on the lenient side and award marks in Band 3 when actually the mark should have been Band 2, Centres should bear in mind that to obtain the highest marks the candidate must analyse, assess in detail and justify comprehensively.

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For the document required in both scenarios 1 and 2, centres are reminded that, in order to obtain the highest mark, then the letter or leaflet should be of a near professional quality. It should be virtually error free and be very convincing in communicating the recommendations and not just list them with no obvious attempt at persuading the stakeholders to accept the changes. In addition the leaflet should be an obvious leaflet and not a poster or a flyer.

# A267 ICT skills for business communication systems

## General Comments

Many candidates performed well on this question paper. There seemed to be very few issues with candidates running out of time in this series compared to previous series, although some candidates did occasionally miss out tasks and carry on with other tasks. .

Candidates, on the whole, did seem well prepared for the paper. The database tasks were generally well done with many candidates able to gain good marks on this task.

The majority of the candidates performed well on Task 1. Transcribing errors were certainly less than in previous series. Candidates were careful not to misuse capital letters.

The ability to write a letter in a business style varied among the candidates. Most candidates knew the basic structure, but some of them were still not always able to recall details such as the correct date or to correctly use open punctuation. Some candidates were unable to perform a mail merge. Many candidates forgot to insert the date.

Most candidates were able to gain some marks when writing a Notice of Meeting and Agenda, but few candidates were able to recall all the items in a Notice of Meeting and Agenda.

Many candidates had a good understanding presentation software and its features and were able to explain these features. The majority of the candidates did not do so well when required to evaluate the usefulness of the software, as many simply repeated its features. Some were able to state basic advantages and disadvantages and were able to gain some marks.

## Comments on Individual Questions

### Task 1

(a) (i) Nearly all of the candidates were able to add details to the database. The misuse of capital letters and typographical errors occasionally lost candidates marks.

(a) (ii) Nearly all of the candidates were able to edit the database.

(a) (iii) The majority of the candidates were able to enter a new field. Some candidates lost marks by putting the new field in the wrong place or by using an un-capitalised 'E' for Email.

(b) (1) Most candidates were able to create a query, selecting the correct field. Some candidates named the query incorrectly or used incorrect search criteria.

(b) (ii) Many candidates were able to make a report of their query. Some candidates incorrectly named their report.

(c) The standards of the letters did improve compared to previous series, but still candidates are omitting vital elements. . Many candidates used the letter template provided; however, many candidates did not use the blocked style and open punctuation. Again, many candidates did not include the date.

Some candidates were unable to mail merge the correct details or to provide evidence of the template letter. Most candidates were able to achieve some marks by transcribing the information in the letter. A few candidates used the 'address block' the marks are not awarded for inserting the correct fields when this is used. Centres are urged to discourage candidates from using the 'address block'.

## **Task 2**

(a) The ability to create a Notice of Meeting and Agenda varied between many candidates were unable to create this business document. Luckily, candidates were still able to gain transcribing and formatting marks. However, this is an aspect of suggested focus for some centres.

(b) (i) Many of the candidates were able to state one or two features of presentation software. Typical features stated included templates, animation and colour schemes. Many candidates were then able to extend their answer to describe these features. Some candidates were able to explain how these features could be used.

(b) (ii) Some of the candidates were able to describe the benefits and drawbacks of Presentation software. Answers included the cost of the software, the user friendliness of the software and the ability to edit the software, and the drawbacks of overuse. . Some candidates were able to gain a few marks in this way. Very few candidates were able to make evaluative comments about the benefits and drawbacks of the software and how this would help 'the business'. Many candidates again wrote about the features of the software, rather than about the benefits and drawbacks to the business of using the software.

**OCR (Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations)**  
1 Hills Road  
Cambridge  
CB1 2EU

**OCR Customer Contact Centre**

**Education and Learning**

Telephone: 01223 553998

Facsimile: 01223 552627

Email: [general.qualifications@ocr.org.uk](mailto:general.qualifications@ocr.org.uk)

**[www.ocr.org.uk](http://www.ocr.org.uk)**

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**OCR (Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations)**  
Head office  
Telephone: 01223 552552  
Facsimile: 01223 552553

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