GNVQ Intermediate
Information & Communication Technology
June 2003
Edexcel is one of the leading examining and awarding bodies in the UK and throughout the world. We provide a wide range of qualifications including academic, vocational, occupational and specific programmes for employers.

Through a network of UK and overseas offices, Edexcel’s centres receive the support they need to help them deliver their education and training programmes to learners.

For further information please call our Customer Response Centre on 0870 240 9800, or visit our website at www.edexcel.org.uk

June 2003
Publications Code G013843
Contents

1. Examiner’s Report – Unit 1: Presenting Information
2. Examiner’s Report – Unit 5: Information Resources
Chief Examiner’s Report

General Comments

This report provides detailed individual feedback for all the units examined in the Summer 2003 series.

In all units there was no overlap between the pre-prepared work and the examination paper, as indicated in the Teacher Guidance Notes that accompanied the pre-release material. These Notes also indicated that the examination papers might include questions on any part of the unit content as defined in the Assessment Evidence Grid and the What You Need To Learn section of the unit specification. Guidance was also given to this effect in each Chief Examiner's report since Summer 2001. However, there was still evidence that candidates in some centres were not sufficiently prepared to answer such questions.

There was evidence of some improvement in performance by candidates when compared to previous examination series; however these general points on the performance of candidates across all units still apply.

- It was apparent that some candidates were entered before they were ready.
- Some candidates limited their answers to stating/naming/identifying when the question asked for descriptions or explanations.
- Some candidates do not read questions carefully enough. Key words are often missed with candidates seemingly answering the question they would like to answer rather than the actual question on the examination paper.
- Candidates had clearly been taught how to answer the Winter 2003 papers, to the extent that many tried to fit the “Winter answers” to the Summer questions.

The following points are again made to help in the preparation of students for future GNVQ examinations.

1. The papers will expect students to have a good knowledge and understanding of the syllabus specification. Papers will be testing the application of such knowledge to real or simulated situations.
2. Delivery of courses should include instruction on concepts, terminologies and techniques and should also follow the vocational philosophy of learning by doing and by studying what is happening in the real world.
3. Papers will be constructed to test, wherever possible, the following aspects of each unit:
   - The full content of the “what you need to learn”.
   - The “assessment evidence grid”.
   - Any additional points from the “essential information for teachers” which relates to the content or assessment evidence grid.
4. The assessment evidence grid provides an example of what might be tested at each grade. The generic grading criteria will be used, with this, to allow all
parts of the content to be tested at any grade. Questions will be differentiated according to the skill being tested and the level of understanding, analysis, reasoning, etc., required by the question.

Pre-prepared Work

The pre-prepared work (PPW) is intended to support the candidate’s learning and provide an opportunity for candidates to demonstrate their abilities.

However, there were some common problems associated with this work.

- In a few centres the work of all candidates was similar, indicating too much guidance being given. In these centres, candidates were able to gain high marks on their PPW, yet were unable to transfer skills and/or knowledge to answering the examination paper.
- The authentication statement is an important document and should be treated with respect. In some centres Teachers either did not sign the authentication statement for all candidates or allowed an authentication statement with a photocopied signature to be submitted.
- Teachers signed authentication statements for a few candidates where a cursory glance by the examiner indicated collusion between those candidates.

Common Administrative Problems

General

In several cases there were discrepancies between the number of candidates entered for an examination and the number of scripts submitted. This caused many difficulties for examiners.

PPW

- A few centres are still submitting PPW in plastic wallets. This wastes the examiner’s time.
- Treasury tags are sometimes attached in such a way that the examiner is unable to turn the pages to mark either PPW or examination answers.
- In some centres, printouts were not each clearly identified with the candidate’s, name, number and centre number.
- Some candidates submitted multiple printouts for a task or printouts of tasks that were not set for this examination.
- Some centres did not include signed authentication statements for all candidates.
- PPW is a part of the examination. “Clean” copies should be submitted. Teachers should not permit candidates to submit marked PPW.

Scripts

- Scripts were not always sorted in the same order as the attendance register.
Where sticky labels were not available, some scripts were named but did not have centre identification on the script.

Some centres did not include an attendance register of any kind with the scripts.

Where typed lists were included, the names were frequently not in any relevant order. Absent candidates were often excluded from such lists.
Intermediate GNVQ – Unit 1: Presenting Information

General

There was evidence of some candidates being entered for Intermediate GNVQ when they should have been doing the Foundation level. Such candidates have more opportunity of demonstrating their ability when entered appropriately.

It was clear which centres had prepared students well for this examination and had given sufficient guidance on the pre-prepared work.

Many candidates have clearly prepared for this examination using the January paper, to the extent that they try to fit correct answers from January to a completely different question. This was particularly evident in question 3(b)(iii), 4(b)(i) and most of question 6.

Examination Paper

Many candidates used “easy to read/understand”, “looks better”, “stands out”, “attractive”, to answer many questions, making little effort to relate their answers either to the question being asked or to the particular document to which the question referred.

Candidates should be encouraged to use terms more precisely. They use pictures interchangeably with graphics and also to mean photographs. Word art is given as a type of graphic when it is really a graphical text “font”. They use boxes to mean both text boxes and tables. Many are confused in their use of title, heading and header.

Many candidates proceeded to write their answers without reading in full what the question was asking them. For example, in Question 1(b), candidates often wrote about what was wrong with the display rather than how it could be improved. This problem was evident throughout the paper.

Some candidates did not appear to be familiar with the scenario. In order to reduce the amount of text given in the questions, there is an assumption that candidates, having spent approximately twenty hours working on their Pre-prepared Work, have an understanding of the scenario.

Question 1

Many candidates wrongly identified logo as a presentation technique. Some candidates used vague terminology such as box instead of text box. A significant number did not read the question properly and provided critical comments on the screen display, suggesting improvements in part (a). Some gave techniques that were not used, such as table or italics. Many candidates did not realise they were looking at a screen display despite this being stated at the start of the question.
Many candidates repeated techniques in part (b). Many focussed primarily on changing the presentation or adding extra items rather than improving what is already there. Ways to improve were often too vague to gain marks; such suggestions included “more clip art”, “use colour”, “rearrange things” and “add a background”.

**Question 2**

Candidates from many centres clearly had not looked at business letters. Many candidates had no idea of the layout. The recipient's address, when included, was usually on the right. Ref: was rarely included, subject line only a little more often. Candidates frequently did not use “Dear” in the salutation. An upper case “S” in sincerely in the closure was common although many used the wrong closure. Many candidates put the signature beneath the name. Several candidates wrote an e-mail rather than a formal letter.

Candidates generally wrote about content rather than presentation in response to (b). Rote responses such as “formal”/ “informal” were common.

Few candidates were able to give a comprehensive response to (c), many wrote about the formality of a letter, others stated that not everyone had access to e-mail. Some candidates attempted to fit an answer from a previous paper to this, different, question.

**Question 3**

In part (a)(i), candidates were often able to give techniques but were unable to describe them, instead giving a reason for using the technique. A large minority incorrectly named Word Art or clip art as techniques used.

Most candidates clearly did not understand what was meant by writing style. Very few described the writing style used in part (ii), giving font styles, bold or large font in their answer. More able candidates were able to answer part (iii) in context and identified the need for a formal style with adult language, and the importance of safety information for use by park staff.

Part (b)(i), was well answered by most candidates, but few were able to describe the techniques as used in the notice.

In part (ii) more candidates recognised the writing style and gave correct answers such as informal, but weaker candidates again confused writing styles with presentation techniques. Frequent answers to part (iii) were “easy to read”, “easy to understand”, etc. Other candidates’ answers related to the equivalent question in January, stating why the presentation techniques made the notice fit for purpose.

**Question 4**

Most candidates made sensible attempts to part (a) although a few omitted it altogether. The errors most commonly missed were “OAP’s”, missing web-site address, wrong year
(2001). Candidates did not always clearly indicate the error; some circled complete sections or lines. Other candidates circled an error but then shot themselves in the foot by indicating an incorrect correction, e.g. “st missing” – implying that the park name should be Queuest.

Most candidates answered part (b)(i) very well but some did not identify words from the advert. Some gave answers to January’s paper, giving “places” or “names” as instances where correct spellings are indicated by an error. Most candidates correctly answered “grammar checker” to (ii) but a significant number left it blank or just stated “grammar” (which is not a software feature).

Most candidates showed the word “main” on the advert, but fewer than half used a recognisable insertion symbol.

Sensible reasons were usually given in part (d) but only the better candidates gave expansions worth the second mark.

**Question 5**

Part (a) was well answered with the majority of candidates gaining 3 or 4 marks.

Candidates from the centres that had covered “forms of information” as understood by the specification did very well on part (b). They were able to identify (i) as “text”, produce a table or chart in (ii), correctly identify it in (iii) and name at least one other form of information in (iv). Candidates from other centres made guesses, such as “formal” in answer to (b)(i) and “memo”, “flyer” or other documents in answer to (iii) and (iv). Their answers to (ii) were most commonly bulleted text (which is the same form of information as that given). Where candidates produced charts or tables in (ii) they frequently omitted the titled and were often inconsistent in giving the times.

**Question 6**

Part (a) was generally well answered although some candidates were too vague to gain marks.

Most candidates gained at least 2 marks for (b) with a significant number getting all 3 marks by recognising that copyright is the relevant law and expanding that to show they understood about copyright. Some candidates talk about non-legal issues to do with choosing a name, such as meaningful names. Others decided that this was the question where they should talk about health and safety issues!

Part (c) tested a part of the specification that has not been tested previously in the external examinations. Few candidates understood what was required, failing to see the significance of the word “manage”. Most decided that this was the question where security, data protection or ergonomic issues were required.

Part (d) was generally well answered although weaker candidates continued to talk about spell checker or grammar checker issues.
Pre-Prepared Work

General

There was evidence of teacher-direction in some centres which, in some cases, caused all candidates from a particular centre to lose marks; for example, in some centres all candidates omitted to include “matters arising” in the agenda.

The standard of the flyer, ticket and leaflet was generally high, although there was a lack of attention to detail; for example, transcription errors in ride names. Candidates tended to be weaker in the production of business documents. The specification indicates that candidates should study a variety of business documents; some candidates have clearly not done this.

Task 1

Many candidates made no mention of the opening in Summer 2003 of Terror Zone, some had no graphics, most had the 5 ride names together with 2 or their own, but there were many transcription errors in the ride names and slogan. A significant number did not identify the company, Adventure Quest, in the flyer. Few double-sided flyers were labelled “back” and “front”.

Task 2

Many made no mention of Adventure Quest on the tickets; few tickets were uniquely identified, either by specified date or ticket number. Most were the correct size and well laid out.

Task 3

The agenda was poorly done. Most made no mention of Adventure Quest. A lot had the date as 23 May for the meeting and didn’t have a venue or purpose of meeting. Some had the standard agenda items present, but most didn’t have all of them. Very few had 3 items on the agenda relevant to the Terror Zone Preview.

Task 4

Leaflets tended to be either very good or very poor. Common errors include:

- Not being designed to be folded in a sensible way, having just 2 “pages” leaving the 2 inside or outside pages blank;
- Messages being omitted, or from the Head rather than the Deputy Head (Caroline Prestwich), or from Muriel McCann (Adventure Quest);
- Leaflets having insufficient detail about the event.

Several candidates were not clear about the purpose of the leaflet, with some just promoting Adventure Quest.

Task 5
Many candidates seem to have used invoice templates, but omitted to enter all the relevant details. Few included an invoice number, customer number or invoice date. The VAT issue was frequently misunderstood; many candidates added VAT on to the given prices and the rate of 17.5% was often omitted. There were frequent errors in the given addresses including incorrect capitalisation, wrong or missing e-mail address. Amounts were poorly aligned.

**Standard Ways of Working**

The majority of candidates had the work in the right order and only had 1 copy of each of the tasks, but quite a number had spelling errors that would have been detected had spell checker been used. Candidates should be aware that extra care should be taken with spelling where Word Art is used.

Some documents were still being submitted in plastic wallets and tasks were occasionally attached in the centre of the script rather than the back.

Some candidates did not identify their documents with their name, centre number and the task.

Some candidates included the whole of the candidate brief with their pre-prepared work. The authentication statement should be removed from the brief for inclusion and the rest of the brief discarded.
INTERMEDIATE GNVQ –
UNIT 5: INFORMATION RESOURCES

General

Generally candidates attempted all questions and were happiest with questions requiring
one-word answers. Pass candidates found explanations/giving advantages and
disadvantages difficult.

There was evidence that there was enough time for the candidates to complete the
paper.

There was evidence that some centres had not covered the unit specifications as
students were lacking in the identification of technical terms and associated meanings.

Examination Paper

Question 1

Overall this question was attempted by most of the candidates. Candidates lost marks
for giving answers such as “easier”, “quicker” and “faster” without expansion.

On the whole part (a)(i) was answered well, however those candidates who stated
newspaper for this fell down on marks for (ii) as majority of the candidates then stated
they could look for job advertisements which were applicable to stationary suppliers, or
even advertise jobs in the newspapers. Unless candidates chose the yellow
pages/directories in (i), they found it very hard to get many marks for the explanation for
how to find source. Some candidates misunderstood the question completely giving
totally incorrect answers relating to advertising for a supplier!

Most candidates identified the keywords for the search in part (b)(i). Candidates found it
hard to get the expansion mark in (ii) as many just said “be more specific”. A few
candidates described how to refine with reference to the search but spoke generally.
There were some who referred to quotation marks and use of AND; generally, these
were on higher scoring scripts.

In part (c)(i) most candidates had a good idea about one advantage but not many got the
second. Answers were often vague. There was widespread use of “quick”, “easy” and
“fast” without specific explanation. Very few scored more than 2 marks in (ii), many
talked about credit card/personal details being hacked, etc., but did not mention them
being used. Candidates often mentioned not being able to feel goods but did not
expand to talk about not being as expected on arrival. Lots talked about delayed in post
etc.

Part (d) was generally answered well.
**Question 2**

Marks gained were much higher for this question, although part (b)(i) did get some methods of communicating with animals. Another approach taken to this question was to give methods of communication with people who **might** adopt animals. These answers gave methods of advertising to possible adopters.

Part (a) was generally answered well although it was clear that some candidates had not read the case study, thus giving totally incorrect answers to (i). Some candidates did not understand (ii) and responded with the Bakes N Shakes, Wildlife Gifts, The Infostore, or the Animal Information Centre, missing facts from the case study.

Overall part (b)(i) was answered well however some candidates' responses were "*text messaging*", "*WAP phone*", "*Mobile phone*". Most candidates were able to write down four methods of communication, but the advantages were not answered in enough detail. "*Fax*" was used but rarely expanded correctly. Candidates found it hard to expand "*e-mail*" with most answers being too vague i.e. "*it's easier*, "*faster*", etc. Many described how to ... rather than giving advantages. Most candidates got 3 or 4 fields in (ii), but many did not know what a field name was; they had worked this out to be something relating to a database and as a result their answers included modules, macros, queries and forms. Other candidates answered this question well but lost marks due to the fact that they stated "*Name*" as a field name. For this question candidates also gave "*Date of Birth*" – but did not state whose date of birth – and "*sex*".

Some candidates were confused as to what they were being asked in (c) and transposed their answers, offering responses to (i) more suited to (ii). Those candidates that answered the question without transposing or misinterpreting lost marks in (i) by stating the use of floppy disk, and removing the floppy disks when they leave the room. Candidates seemed to have little concept of PHYSICAL security - lots said "*Alarms*"; many just said "*Passwords*". Very few candidates mentioned firewall in (ii) and although many candidates said password they referred to a "secure password". No-one got "remote password".

**Question 3**

Part (a) was the best question on the paper for many candidates, although marks were lost for not enough detail in the answers. Some candidates made the assumption that George wanted to travel that day. Methods of communication were identified well though many did not say **who** to phone, the disadvantages were identified but many candidates offered 2 separate disadvantages instead of a disadvantage and expansion.

A lot of candidates did not know the difference between and input and output device, and in a lot of cases part (b) was left blank. A number of candidates said CD-ROM in (i) and screen with no other explanation in (ii). It was obvious that this part of the specifications was not covered. Part (iii) was mostly answered OK although a number of candidates did not relate the question to “accessing information on Snow Leopards” from the CD ROM encyclopaedia. Some candidates either did not read part (iv) correctly or they did not understand what was being asked of them, as a number of candidates stated that they would flick between the article and a new word processing document.
and type in the words themselves. Most candidates however got at least 2 marks from copy and paste.

Part (c) was, on the whole, answered reasonably well. Although most candidates understood the meaning of copyright, very few were awarded 2 marks as the legal issues were rarely discussed. Part (ii) was answered well even if they had not answered part (i) correctly.

**Question 4**

Most candidates got four points in (a), although there was some repetition. Where candidates failed to gain the 4 marks, they either did not respond in question format, or they asked questions that did not relate to the range of drinks, with questions such as “What is your age?”.  

Most said interview or questionnaire in (b), although some missed the point completely. Not many got the expansion marks. Many candidates used survey indicating that were physically asking rather than using a paper based questionnaire. On the whole, this question was answered badly and very few candidates obtained more than 2 marks. Knowledge or understanding of the data collection process was weak.

Part (c) was not very well answered; most candidates thought of ways to present, but could not describe ways to present information.

It was evident that some centres have not taught the candidates about information overload, so there was lot of guess work.

**Question 5**

This question had some of the lowest marks gained overall.

Part (a) was very disappointing. Most candidates said alphabetical, but did not say by author/title etc. Many candidates obtained zero for this question. It was evident that some centres had not mentioned the Dewey Decimal system.

Part (b) was prone to the “faster”, “easier” answer. Candidates seemed to understand why the computer-based catalogue was more useful than the card system in terms of searching, but found it hard to express their ideas. Generally it appeared that many candidates do not have experience of using a computer-based catalogue.

Few candidates obtained more than one mark for part (i), Most candidates’ answers were about finding the information, not searches or editing etc. Very few candidates obtained full marks for part (ii) and again tried to offer 2 disadvantages rather than 1 and expansion. Although it was mostly answered satisfactorily, many said “could lose information” they did not add “if not saved”. Part (iii) was answered very badly on the whole. Many answered this question as if they were searching for **anything** on the Internet, or if they were setting up a database query because it was not obvious what type of resource they were looking for.
Pre-Prepared Work

On the whole, it appears that some centres had not given any guidance whatsoever. One centre in particular must have interpreted the question incorrectly as every single candidate in the centre made an itinerary from Manchester to Brisbane; there was a similar situation in another centre but going from a location in southern England as opposed to Doncaster! It was obvious that some centres did not refer to the teacher’s guidance.

The Teacher Guidance Notes gives plenty of advice regarding the contents of the tasks, but Task 4 was often lacking in the detail suggested in these notes. Other guidance is found on the FAQ page of the Edexcel web site.

Task 1

Very few candidates obtained full marks for task 1(a), key steps were often omitted. One centre had completed this task in both the form of a data flow diagram and steps, the data flow diagram was not appropriate, particularly when bearing in mind how much time the candidates would have taken to complete this task. Other candidates had written the steps that they would follow in the past tense, therefore, losing at least one mark.

On the whole part (b) was answered well; however some candidates from at least one centre had drawn the image of the animal. Several candidates had extended the facts onto 2 pages. There was confusion over origin versus habitat, and occasionally the description was not a description of the animal but its behaviour. Most centres had encouraged candidates to use clearly signposted headings, making it easier to mark.

Task 2

As in task 1(a) some candidates from one centre did task 2(a) in the form of a data flow diagram, this looked very well presented but in fact it would have been better as a list of simple steps. Candidates found it virtually impossible to get 4 marks for this question. Many concentrated on the journey rather than the process of obtaining the detail for the itinerary. Candidates are so used to Broadband and searching using search engines, they missed the first few marks when explaining the steps as they did not state what they had actually done.

Task 2(b) was generally answered well, but some candidates printed out the web page rather than simply screen dumping the image. In addition, several used text boxes for annotation or included a series of screen dumps indicating that they had not read the task properly.

Task 2(c) should have been a straightforward question to enable candidates to gain maximum marks. However this was not the case. Answers were not always in table format and this made it difficult to read.

Centres failed to encourage their candidates to signpost the key elements sought in the task which was easily achieved in a simple table structure, as mentioned in the teacher’s
guidance. Some candidates had placed a screen shot of details of train times for the journey in the middle of the itinerary; others used a list but did not highlight relevant data, on occasion a series of screen dumps was used to reflect the journey stages.

Some candidates did not show the duration time or the arrival point (Toowoomba) they just mentioned Australia, so they lost marks. There seemed to be confusion over the timing of the journey.

Task 3

On the whole this was answered well although it was evident that some centres had not taught candidates much about the Data Protection Act. Some candidates had shown initiative and had put the principles from the DPA into their own words so that people working at the sanctuary could understand, yet often they lost marks here because the language used was poor.

Task 4

On the whole the bibliography was answered well. In some cases, candidates did include the author of the book. Often the layout of the bibliography was not clear, for example not itemised task by task, making it harder to mark. In many cases candidates listed search engines used rather than websites for tasks 2 and 3.

Standard Ways of Working

On the whole candidates achieved good marks; most documents were in the correct order. Candidates lost marks mostly for poor presentation of the itinerary and for using more than one side of A4 for the fact sheet.

Some centres are not following guidance about the PPW in terms of attaching it to the back of the script with a treasury tag. In some cases plastic wallets were still being used and in others PPW was linked to the script inside the front cover.
Chief Moderator’s Report

This report provides feedback on all the units moderated in the Summer 2003 series. The report gives general comments that are applicable to all units and then provides specific comments related to the most common difficulties encountered in each unit. Please read both sections.

In highlighting the weaknesses observed in many centres there is a danger that I overlook the outstanding work produced in others. To those centres I offer my compliments and congratulations – it was a joy to see the knowledge, skills and understanding evidenced by their students in portfolios produced in response to good teaching and interesting, relevant and well-designed assignments. Well done to those centres.

As the number of students doing this qualification continues to rise it is heartening to see many centres raising their level of achievement through a systematic approach to the feedback they receive from various sources. In these centres the following materials are read, digested and incorporated into improvements in delivery and assessment practice:

- centre report following moderation
- Chief Moderator’s Report
- GNVQ ICT section of the Edexcel website (eg portfolio guidance, forms and tracking sheets)
- professional development and training materials (national and customised).

Students in these centres benefit enormously from the resultant increase in understanding of the specification and assessment methodology.

However there are still too many centres that appear to be delivering the qualification in ignorance – either of the qualification itself or a specific lack of understanding of ICT systems and software. It also appears that in some centres the deliverers of the qualification are not receiving adequate training and development – either because the person who introduced the qualification has moved on or because the centre believes the learning materials used provide the ‘complete solution’. All too often this has proved not to be the case. Training in the qualification, and also in some centres in the use of specific software packages eg database applications, vector- and bitmap-graphics packages, etc, should be ongoing.

In some centres it appeared that tutors were ‘teaching to the Pass grade’ and making no attempts to support student achievement at higher grades. This was extremely disappointing. Limiting student achievement is completely against the philosophy of GNVQ. This moderation process is designed to provide feedback so that centres can identify how to move students on to higher grades.

The most popular optional units continue to be Y204P (Design Project), Y206P (Graphics) and Y207P (Multimedia).

Getting the Level Right
Overall there was more poorly presented and assessed work at Intermediate level than there was at Foundation level. In some centres assessors appear to be unclear of how to award points between 0 and 16.

Many centres need to gain a much better understanding of the Intermediate level (ie progressing from Foundation and on to Advanced) and of Pass, Merit and Distinction quality work.

Before starting a unit it may be advisable to look at the relevant unit at the level below (ie Foundation) to see what it is their Intermediate students are already expected to know, understand and be able to do. They might also look at a relevant unit at the level above (ie VCE) to see what students should be aspiring to. At Intermediate level students should be taught procedural skills so that they have a structure for tackling any ICT problem presented to them. They need to analyse before designing – thinking about what it is the user needs in order that what they produce will be 'fit for purpose'. It might be useful to reinforce this 'systems life cycle approach' at the start of each unit.

As they move from Pass to Merit to Distinction students should be taking ownership for the quality of their work. They must understand that in order to produce something useful for their intended user/reader they must first analyse their requirements and plan carefully. Having produced a solution to the user’s problem they must test it to make sure that obvious errors are eliminated and that it works as they intended it to in their designs. They would be expected to work smarter – producing better quality work rather than more of the same quality. Merit students will be able to work without too much direction from their tutor and will clearly evidence that they are capable of working to deadline. Higher grade students will demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of ICT systems from the onset – in their analyses, their plans and first drafts, their tests and refinements, and in their final evaluation. This evaluation will be seen from the user’s perspective and improvements will be expected. They will use the correct technical language in their explanations, evaluations, comparisons and improvements.

Achievement tended to be higher where students had extensively annotated their work. Annotation can be used to successfully evidence a number of Pass grade criteria eg where they sorted a database or how they used the software to produce a macro. However in using the correct technical terms to explain their actions or justify their choices they are also accruing evidence to support some of the higher-grade criteria. Where students do nothing except provide printouts of documents it is left to the assessor /moderator to work out what has been done and why. These students are limiting themselves to lower grades.

What to Present for Assessment/Moderation?

There was still evidence to indicate that some centres were unclear as to what to present for assessment. It was distressing for moderators to observe that in several centres candidates had put in a great deal of hard work but had not effectively addressed the assessment evidence requirements for even the most basic Pass criteria.

Students are expected to produce evidence to meet the banner and grade criteria specified in the Assessment Evidence Grid for the relevant unit. Further clarification of individual criteria is provided in the What You Need To Learn (WYNTL) section and in the Essential Information for Teachers (including the grade descriptors in that section).
Whilst assessment practice has been modified since the introduction of this qualification to include some compensation at Merit/Distinction level and for small parts at Pass level it is still advisable to instruct students to provide hard evidence for each component part of each criterion.

There is an expectation that students are taught the theory from the WYNTL and then apply that theory to an ICT problem in a relevant vocational context. The evidence from the stages that the student goes through in solving that problem will form the basis of their portfolio work. Learning materials/formative work should not be included with the summative portfolio work.

**Learning Materials**

Some centres are being led too much by the learning materials (eg books, on-line courses, etc) they have purchased. First and foremost they need to understand the qualification – its structure, the levels, the teaching requirement, the assessment. It is the centre’s responsibility to ensure that the learning materials they use provide sufficient opportunities for all candidates to fully cover the evidence requirements. For even the compulsory units eg unit2 databases, but especially for the specialist optional units eg graphics, multimedia, etc an experienced ICT teacher or someone familiar with the use of the software in a vocational context is needed.

Too often we found that students were being taught ‘by rote’ – following prescriptive assignments that merely illustrated that they could follow instructions i.e. do this, now do that. The prescriptive approach disadvantages higher ability Intermediate candidates, as they do not demonstrate progression from ideas, through draft design to stages of implementation. Better teaching materials will provide the students with a structure for solving ICT problems – a ‘systems life cycle approach’ that they can apply to any ICT problem. The assignment will be open-ended so that the students are free to develop their own individual solutions to the problem. This approach will encourage independence and will allow them to demonstrate their ability to think.

**Resources**

Edexcel GNVQs are vocational courses. The aims of the course are stated (on page 11 of the Intermediate ICT specification) as encouraging students to:

- use ICT for the presentation and manipulation of information
- acquire knowledge and understanding of the prominent features of ICT as reflected by its use across many industry, commerce and service sectors
- acquire knowledge and understanding of the hardware and software used to provide ICT services
- acquire and apply the basic skills and techniques needed by those working in ICT services
- develop an appreciation of the role played by ICT in society as a whole.

In good centres the staff make every attempt to incorporate relevant vocational contexts into their teaching. The vocational principle of ‘learning by doing’ is foremost in their minds. Optional units are selected only if they have the resources and staff expertise to support that specialization.
In all too many centres we observed students undertaking specialist units eg graphics, without suitable software and/or hardware and sometimes, with apparently no specialist to support them. ‘Making do’ with word-processing and painting packages (instead of the required vector-based and bitmap-based software) misleads the students about commercial software. The centre has a responsibility to ensure that all aspects of the specification are covered and this *must* guide their choice of optional unit.

**Still Errors in Criteria Common to all Units**

It was disappointing to observe that there were still centres who were failing to address the criteria common to all units even though previous Chief Moderator Reports have outlined the same points – backing up, independent work, meeting deadlines, checking accuracy, evaluation/improvements. Further explanations on all these points are provided again in the sections below.
Common Administrative Problems

Sampling and Supply of Work

Most centres followed the instructions for sampling and provided the correct number and range of student portfolios. However there were still some centres that did not do so. Failure to follow procedures can delay the moderation process and centres risk the timely release of their results. The “Guidance for Centres” on the moderation of portfolios should always be read very carefully.

Most centres submitted their samples by the correct dates. However there were a proportion of centres that submitted late and/or failed to submit the second sample by the required deadline. Again, any failure to follow procedures puts the centre’s results at risk.

OPTEMS

The moderation process uses the point score recorded on the OPTEMS and sent in to Edexcel. It does not use the score recorded on the front of student portfolios. Occasionally the two marks differed. Centres are therefore advised to ensure that these marks are transcribed carefully on to the OPTEMS.

Packaging, Organisation of Work

Moderators moderate each unit separately and thus expect to be able find all the work for that one unit presented together in a well-ordered ‘portfolio’. Moderation re-assesses the work against the assessment evidence grid for each unit. In several centres it was difficult to discern which material was being presented for which unit – the entire student output being presented in one disorganised package.

Extraneous Material

Most centres ensured that all evidence presented was relevant to the criteria being assessed. However in a small number of centres a sometimes considerable amount of additional material had been included – formative exercises, class notes, etc. This made it very difficult for moderators to find the relevant materials.

General Portfolio Issues

Level of Entry

It was disappointing to see that some centres are still entering all their students at Intermediate level when some of the students are clearly operating below that level and struggling to evidence even the Pass criteria. If it is not possible to identify before registration whether a student is Foundation level or Intermediate then it is possible to transfer that student’s registration at a later date should they subsequently be found to be operating below, or in some cases, above that level. Centres should contact Entries and Certification to discuss the issues surrounding transfers.
It is always better if students can be put on the correct course from the start. Centres therefore need to gain a solid understanding of the difference in the requirements between Foundation and Intermediate levels so that they can conduct an accurate diagnosis at the start of the course.

**Cheating**

It was alarming to see the level of incidence of cheating/collusion increasing. Even where assessors had signed the OPTEMS sheets to indicate that the work presented was the student’s own it was possible for moderators to see, after only a cursory glance, that some of the work was identical. The assessor could easily have detected this during assessment. In addition there were several instances where identical work appeared to have been assessor-led, ie the class having been provided with identical sheets to be included in the portfolios. Centres are reminded that students should be providing hard evidence for each criterion that shows that they alone have produced what is required.

An incidence of cheating can put the results of all students from the centre at risk and/or can delay the process of release of results. Centres are thus asked to (i) ensure that all students are aware of the seriousness with which Edexcel takes cheating, (ii) take adequate steps to reduce incidences of cheating and (iii) check all work for cheating before signing the authentication statement on the OPTEMS form.

**Assessment**

Centres are advised to ensure that they fully understand the current Joint Council for General Qualifications (JCGQ) guidance on compensation (at Merit/Distinction level) and small parts (at Pass level). Some centres were not applying these rules correctly and as a result their assessment decisions may not have met National Standards.

**Internal Standardisation**

Where there are several assessors in one programme it is critical that the centre conducts an internal standardisation activity to ensure that all work presented for moderation reflects the assessment practice at the centre. Internal standardisation can help to ensure that all assessors are assessing in the same way and to the same standard.

**Evidence**

Yet again, there were a number of centres who submitted soft evidence in the form of disks, CD ROMs, etc. Section 5.5 of the “Guidance for Centres” specifically stated that ‘Due to the variation in software existing for computer based evidence, centres must present hard copies of any of this type of work’.

**Use of Checklists, Annotation by Teacher**

Logical sequencing and signposting to identify where each criterion had been met made moderation much more efficient. Many centres were making good use of checklists to
identify where evidence could be found. Such checklists are available on the ICT area of the Edexcel website under ‘Forms and Tracking Sheets’. If centres devise their own they must be careful that they are an accurate reflection of the Assessment Evidence Grids. Occasionally students missed evidence out because they had not been identified on the centre-devised checklist.

**Witness Statements**

There are very few criteria where hard evidence cannot be generated to support achievement. Where it is not possible to produce such evidence witness statements can be used. These statements should be individualised for each candidate and should explain exactly what the candidate has been seen to do and when. They should be signed and dated by the assessor. Witness statements should not be mass-produced photocopies of the same statement, nor should they be ‘ticklist’ statements lacking any written commentary.

**User Needs**

In most units students are required (in P1) to describe the user’s needs. Many students appear unable to do other than cut and paste the user needs from the assignment their tutor has given them. Spending time on this criterion before rushing into the assignment can improve attainment significantly. By defining what the user needs the student then has a list of criteria for use later in their evaluation. At that stage they can accurately determine whether their solution does what the user wanted it to. In addition time spent on P1 usually produces solutions that are well planned and thought through – rather than obviously developed as they go along.

**Standard Ways of Working**

Most of the internally assessed units have a small section at the end of the WYNTL entitled ‘standard ways of working’. A more detailed description of the requirements is given in unit 1 on pages 30-32. The section covers many of the criteria that permeate every unit including the need to:

- ensure that information they produce is accurate and readable
- plan their work to produce what is required to given deadlines
- use file names that are sensible and which help to remind them of the contents
- store files where they can easily find them in the directory/folder structure
- keep information secure:
  - by saving work regularly, and using different filenames
  - by keeping dated backup copies of files on another disk and in another location

Standard ways of working (sww) encourages students to develop a good discipline for working within ICT. In the best work it is easily seen that this discipline has been effectively taught from the start and students are taught ‘working skills’ that help them become effective in the workplace. These students fully understand the need to use headers/footers and to save with sensible filenames, etc.

Unfortunately moderators still see some work where students have not adopted this discipline and continue to use inappropriate language in their portfolios and in the naming of their files.
Checking Work for Accuracy

The requirement to check work for accuracy occurs twice in most units – at Pass and again at Merit level - and many centres still do not appear to understand the difference between the two. At both levels there should be some explicit evidence that the candidate has actually checked their work – either before and after evidence, or a list of identified errors, or where the work produced is error free, narrative of the process of checking could be included. If there is no explicit evidence of correcting then there should be few obvious errors remaining.

At Pass level candidates should verify that data entry is correct. At this level students would be expected to check that the data they have entered is accurate, e.g. spelling, punctuation and grammar.

At Merit level we are looking for higher order skills and students would be expected to check the accuracy of their work as a whole –
- Do the formulae/functions work as expected? (manual checking can prove they do)
- Does the validation work? Are the error messages correct?
- Does the navigation work in their website / PowerPoint presentation?
- Does the layout make it easy to use/read etc?

Test plans can evidence this criterion – especially if they include a column that details action taken if the outcome isn’t as expected. The solution or correction of errors found at this stage can also help lift students into Distinction (e.g. Unit 3 editing program code). It will certainly help with their evaluations.

Independent Work/Meeting Deadlines

In a surprisingly large number of centres tutors failed to evidence this criterion adequately. Quite often a tick on a checklist was the only evidence presented.

At Intermediate level students should be moving to work independently of their teacher/tutor – certainly at Merit level it is expected that the student should be able to complete an assignment without being guided at every step of the way. Following a set of instructions is not ‘independent work’.

A brief, signed and dated statement should be provided that indicates the level of support given to the student. Edexcel checklists provide a space for this on the front cover. Giving the deadline date for the unit and the date that the candidate actually handed in the work is an easy way of meeting the second part of the criterion. Again, a signature is required from the assessor.

Use of Headers and Footers

Students need to understand the purpose of headers and footers in the identification and location of documents for future use. Candidates should follow this standard way of working in the organisation of their own work but should also be able to consider their user and provide appropriate headers/footers for the context in which they are working.
Backing up of Work

In some instances, students did not appear to have backed up any of their work. Backing up is a process that the students must undertake themselves (i.e. not a reliance on technicians incrementally backing up the system). They need to prevent the loss of their work by saving to somewhere that is remote from their main work area. Backing up of files is usually evidenced by screen shots before and after saving in a secondary location e.g. saving onto floppy disk, emailing to another computer (e.g. at home). If neither of these is possible then we will accept regular saving, saving under another filename or saving in a separate back-up folder in their work area.

Annotations

Some students are still reluctant to write on their work. Annotations are the biggest single source of evidence of understanding. If students can write on their work why, how and what they have done they are providing evidence for higher grade criteria. Annotation can be handwritten on prints/screenshots, printed boxes + arrows, or narrative which refers to prints/screenshots. If students can use correct technical language in their explanations then they have an even better chance of a Merit or higher.

Evaluations

Very few candidates were able to produce constructive evaluations that viewed the product through the eyes of the user. Those candidates who did succeed in this area had sought feedback from a ‘user’ who used the system and provided feedback, which was then incorporated into the evaluation. The best type of user was someone other than a peer. Very few solutions are perfect and in commercial situations initial testing is viewed as part of the development process. Improvements are expected and students must realise that errors are acceptable at this level. Too many students stated that their product ‘worked fine’. Students who had kept a log of their progress were able to easily identify the problems they had encountered and explain how they had overcome them.

Use of Technical Language

Distinction candidates are expected to be fluent in the technical language associated with the unit under study. They must avoid vague, ‘person-off-the-street’ descriptions and explanations and they must not use technical terms incorrectly. Better candidates will embrace the opportunity to annotate all aspects of their work and try to be precise in their descriptions.

Portfolio Guidance

More detailed notes on generic issues and on the more popular portfolio units are provided in the GNVQ ICT area of the Edexcel website under ‘portfolio guidance’.
Unit 2 – Handling Information (Y202P)

Please also read the notes on general portfolio issues.

Assessors tended to be overgenerous in the awarding of points at Distinction level. To achieve at this level students must show an in-depth understanding of databases and spreadsheets and use complex facilities efficiently and effectively i.e. they must work, must be appropriate and must help the user become more efficient.

Banner - Relational Database

Chief Moderator’s Reports over the past two series have identified that students are not producing databases that are ‘relational’. The definition for this is given at the top of page 43 of the Intermediate specification. The diagram and associated text illustrate that a relational database is considered to be two or more tables linked through a one-to-many relationship, primary key to foreign key. Whilst this diagram uses three tables, two will suffice but if linked through one-to-one relationships the database would NOT be deemed to be relational.

Single table databases, or database tables linked only through a one-to-one relationship, must be viewed as GNVQ Foundation standard. At Intermediate level students are expected to be progressing beyond Foundation level towards the VCE level where a properly constructed relational database, correctly normalised, is expected.

It would appear that some centres are under the impression that if students use a relational database software package then everything they produce using the software will be a relational database – this is not the case.

Students who do not correctly evidence a relational database will not meet the requirements for the Unit 2 Banner or for Pass criteria 2, 4 and 5 – and will not achieve a Pass Grade.

This problem is compounded where students are allowed to have free choice. Where staff confidence with database software is low then centres would be advised to present the students with a limited range of ICT problems for scenarios that ‘work’ i.e. have the potential to produce a correctly structured database e.g. any hiring business (video, cars, construction equipment), any retail business (suppliers database), etc.

P3, P4, M1, M2, D3 – Spreadsheet Facilities

Much can also be said about spreadsheets that do not provide the capacity to utilise the required range of facilities. P3, P4, M1, M2 and D3 require students to evidence a specific list of spreadsheet facilities e.g. IF…THEN, relative and absolute cell references, etc. If the problem presented by the student does not provide the scope to use these facilities then the student may not achieve the grade s/he deserves. ‘Bolt-on’ spreadsheet tasks specifically to show how to use an “if statement” are not in the spirit of the unit. The model produced should be sufficiently complex to enable this to be integrated.

Rather than provide one assignment for all or the other extreme of free choice, it might be better to allow choice from a restricted range of problems all of which provide the
opportunity to evidence all the assessment criteria, including the generation of charts or
tables and graphs!

**P1 - User Requirements**

Very few students produced good evidence for this criterion, which can contribute to M5, D1 and D2. Most candidates merely regurgitated the brief that had been set by their tutor instead of thinking through what output/information their user needed, what data was available to their user and how they (as the systems designer) were going to process that data to produce the output required (e.g. what queries and reports will be required to meet the user needs? what calculations are required?). Rough plans helped the better students to organise their thinking.

**P4 – Data Processing Skills**

A significant number of portfolios failed to evidence all the components of P4. Failure to evidence their ability to utilise basic data processing tools can work against students capable of higher grades. Many centres continue to misunderstand ‘prediction’. Students should be aware of the advantages of using a spreadsheet to model data and better assignments provide scope for the students to carry out ‘What If’ processing. The prediction of specific test results (e.g. manually checking formulae) can also evidence this component of P4.

All Intermediate students should be able to generate reports from their database software (i.e. not just print the output from queries). Some candidate’s reports were effectively presented but did not contain data from related tables. Many of the charts/graphs submitted were weak, often too small, lacking in detail or with an inappropriate (i.e. not meaningful) legend being inserted. Many lacked appropriate titles. The spreadsheet scenario should be complex enough to support the generation of more than one type of chart. Frequently students produced only one pie chart rather than different types of charts.

**M1 - Sorting on Multiple Fields**

Candidates continue to produce several sorts but fail to produce one sort on multiple fields (primary sort on one field secondary sort on a different field) in either their database or their spreadsheet. Quite often candidates may have carried out a multiple sort but fail to produce evidence either in their printouts or through their explanations / annotations.

**D3 - Complex Facilities**

Many centres did not provide their students with scenarios wide enough to encompass complex facilities. The students will have demonstrated their ability to insert simple formulae in P3. At Distinction level they should be capable of constructing more complex formulae e.g. percentages or formulae using brackets.

Complex search criteria use AND or OR (and possibly NOT) – see page 40 of the spec for more detail. Filters can also be performed as long as they use logical operators. The
searches MUST be on related tables. Absolute cell referencing could include naming cells or 3D referencing in linked sheets.

Occasionally more advanced techniques were employed which would have been appropriate to a VCE student at the expense of evidence required for the Intermediate specification.

At Distinction level the criteria assume that the student has been taught about a range of database and spreadsheet facilities and that they can select the most appropriate for their purposes and reject the ones that do not meet their requirements. If they could explain what they used and why then they would be producing evidence for D1 and D2. Few candidates were able to do this.
Unit 3 – Hardware and Software (Y203P)

Please also read the notes on general portfolio issues.

This unit appeared to present the most problems for centres this series. Many centres appeared to have difficulty providing the resources (time, staff, access to systems) to deliver this unit effectively. Unfortunately we saw many ‘quick-fix’ solutions to this unit, which did not provide adequate evidence that each student had configured their system or in fact set up an operational system in the first place. In some instances centres had issued photocopied screenshots for students to annotate. This was completely against the spirit of the GNVQ and did not evidence anything except that students could annotate photocopies of screenshots.

Far too many centres allowed students to spend too long on html work to the detriment of the real focus of the unit – the creation of an operational ICT system for a user.

**Banner, P5 - Setting up Equipment**

This unit requires students to produce ‘an operational ICT system configured to meet user needs’ (Banner). P5 requires students to show 'your ability to work safely when setting up equipment'. Page 60 of the Intermediate specification (Essential information for teachers/Investigation) further explains how the subject should be taught. Previous Chief Moderator Reports have also explained what we would expect to see as evidence in a student's portfolio.

There must be some evidence that the students have set up a system i.e. connected the hardware together - and completed it safely. The system they connect may be a different one to that specified for their user in P1. This could be effectively evidenced by including a digital photo or sketch of the back of the system unit/tower with all ports etc labelled. The students could then write an account, using the diagram, of what they did to put their system together. A reliable witness can then authenticate that they did this safely. ICT teacher / tutor, ICT technician or network / system manager would all be deemed suitable. Alternatively digital photos, stage-by-stage diagrams or witness statement can back this up.

Students who do not correctly evidence the setting up of an operational ICT system will not achieve a Pass Grade.

**P1, M1 - User Needs**

A significant number of candidates did not address this criterion particularly well. For P1 the candidate must give a clear description of what the user wants from their system. Software, including both the operating system and applications software, should be defined and ideally the purpose should be clearly stated eg “The Company would need a word-processing package to write their letters. I have selected XYZ software because ..”. The software chosen will usually inform the hardware requirements. In many cases configuration requirements were not described. These could have been specified by the user, or identified by the candidate. In either event, there should have been a clear explanation as to how the configuration would meet the user needs.
At Merit level the students must supply detailed definitions of input and output devices and there must be evidence that they understand what they have selected – and related it to their user’s needs. The assessor should be looking for more technical specifications – main processor ratings, speed versus storage capacity, benefits of one type of printer over another, etc.

In many cases hardware and software details were taken directly off the Internet without any attempt to relate them to their user or re-phrase into the candidate’s own words.

**P2, P3, M3, - Configuring the Operating System/Applications Software**

In some centres the evidence for this was particularly weak. Candidates MUST evidence all Pass criteria in order to achieve a Pass grade or higher.

P2 and P3 expect the candidate to demonstrate that they can alter the configuration of operating system and applications software. They should be able to evidence all of the elements of P2 and P3. The best evidence explains the process of doing what is required. This is generally done through a limited range of screenshots that have been annotated with explanations of what they did (and why they did it). Ideally the screenshots should show the configuration before and after the student has made the changes. M3 looks for progression from the Pass requirements and expects additional configuration evidence specifically geared to help their particular user eg keyboard shortcuts.

Occasionally students have been producing a set of instructions, written to a third party, of how to carry out the process. Unfortunately this does not usually show that the students themselves have actually changed something on the system.

There is no need to install software at this level. Students MUST evidence their use of an electronic / on-screen help facility eg Microsoft Help, Office assistant, useful web page, even on-line teaching packages.

**P3, M2, D3 – Macro and Template**

Evidence for these criteria tended to be weak. Evidence for these criteria tended to be weak. Many students got very confused between macro and template. There was less confusion where the macro did not launch the template.

P3 expects that the student can demonstrate that they can set up a macro and a template. M2 requires them to explain how the macro/template works and why the user would need them. Evidence for this could be a small number of annotated screenshots showing the creation of the macro at various stages and explaining what the macro did when it was run. At Merit level the students do not have to access html code (see page 60 of the specification) but it is one way for more able students to evidence M2 and also to access the Distinction criterion D4.

D3 requires the candidate to demonstrate a higher level of understanding and to evaluate their macro and template from the point of view of their user. Rather than just relying on others to reach these conclusions students could justify how their template / macro and toolbar / keyboard actions (D1) have helped their user become more effective and efficient. They could also explain how their actions ensure high-quality output eg using their knowledge of unit 1 to explain how the template ensures consistent corporate style.
At this level macros and templates should not be of poor quality. It should be easy to see what they achieve and how they help potential users.

**P4, M2, M3, D2, D4 – HTML**

These criteria show the same sort of progression as others in this unit yet centres still appear to misunderstand the progression from Pass, through Merit to Distinction.

P4 requires the candidate to prepare a plan for an html program. This is an absolute requirement and yet many students failed to produce any evidence for this at all. The plan, which can be hand-drawn sketches or computer-drawn diagrams, should show their design for 3 to 5 pages. It MUST show (through notes and/or annotation) where they will incorporate ALL the components including sound and navigation routes (a minimum of two different types of link). Students aiming for higher grades would be wise to plan for three types of navigation method in order to meet D2.

Merit level criteria assess the students’ ability to realise their design using appropriate software. M3 requires candidates to demonstrate that they can use html software to translate their plan (P4) into the finished product (eg web pages). Students should provide evidence to show their use of the software for example the process of creating a hypertext link between two pages. Annotated screenshots are usually sufficient. M2 can be evidenced by the annotation of their web pages as viewed through a browser. The annotation should identify and explain the design features that they specified in their plan (P4) – particularly the component parts – text, graphics, navigation routes and sound.

Distinction level criteria expect candidates to assess the quality of their work and to access html code, at least in the way that tags operate (see page 60 of the specification). The student should look at their product from the point of view of the user and check that they can move around the site with ease. Evidence for D2 could be a test plan or feedback from users on text, sound, graphics and navigation. Some students identified errors in the program that they were able to rectify through changes in the html code – this then successfully evidenced D4. Ideally students should evidence D4 through before and after printouts (annotated to explain what they did). Some students edited macro code, others placed comments within parts of the program (use of <!-- comment -->).

Some centres successfully cross-referenced this work to one of the presentations for Unit 7 Multimedia. In these centres students had ensured that they produced the evidence for this unit but also added in the additional evidence required for Unit 7 eg P4 storyboards.
Unit 4 – Design Project (Y204P)

Please also read the notes on general portfolio issues.

This optional unit was more popular than last year. While some of the projects were far from stimulating the work submitted for moderation was of an appropriate standard for Intermediate and generally accurate in its assessment. Where centres had problems with this unit it was because they failed to recognise that it was a design unit. Many of the evidence criteria focus on planning, testing and evaluating – things that most students do not enjoy. In some centres students tried to expand the work that had been done for other units eg unit 2 or they were given a set of discrete tasks that together did not form a project of sufficient complexity. The project must be sufficiently complex to allow the students to cover the EIGHT stages of systems development detailed on pages 65 to 69. Candidates must clearly evidence the process of designing, creating, testing and evaluating their product. To do this unit effectively they MUST spend some time on P1 & P2 prior to implementation. Students MUST show that their product works.

Centres embarking on this unit must read the Essential Information for Teachers (pages 71 to 73) as well as the WYNTL section (pages 65 – 69) and assessment evidence grid (p 70). Useful information is also provided in the ‘portfolio guidance’ in the GNVQ ICT area of the Edexcel website.

P1 - User/Purpose

Whilst most candidates were able to describe their user and provide sufficient evidence to meet the Pass criteria higher grade students frequently did not spend enough time on this section. Time spent here pays dividends in the quality of the final product and can produce evidence for D1. Viewing this in a commercial sense can often help candidates to produce better evidence – if the project were to be taken on what would need to be produced for the user, what resources would be required, how long would it take (ie how much would it cost the company)?

P2, M2, M5, D2, D3- designing and planning

As with other units these criteria show progression. At Pass grade candidates must show that they can think through the project and break it down into its component parts to produce a plan. Candidates should try to include evidence for all the elements of P2. Merit grade requires much more detail. It might be useful for the students to imagine that they are giving instructions to a third party who will produce the product commercially. They should therefore guide them on what goes where and how users will navigate through the product. Accurate storyboarding or sketches of spreadsheet layouts/sketches of printouts will need annotating to describe their component parts and explain why they are needed e.g. including a hit counter on their website to assess popularity. Students must evidence that they are checking their progress against their planned timescale and MUST show that they completed their project on time. Logs or action plans can be useful for this purpose; some students have successfully used project management software. Problems should not be ignored – D3 requires students to explain how they overcame them.

At Distinction level rather than just relying on others to reach these conclusions candidates could justify how their product helped their user become more effective and
efficient. They might like to produce user documentation that will tell the user how to use their product – and thus improve their efficiency and effectiveness. Estimating the time taken for different tasks is difficult and will improve with practice. Reviewing the proposed timescale / work plan as the candidate progresses through the project will assist them in future projects. They need to understand that project management is essential for commercial activities and monitoring and revising their plans is part of the design process.

P3, P4 - Working Product

Frequently students omitted to show that what they had produced (a) worked as they intended it to in their designs and (b) was what the user wanted. A detailed witness statement can back up evidence from screen grabs, printouts and student notes/annotations. Testing was not always explicit and most students needed to cover this in greater detail. Tests must check that the product was complete (have all the components required by the user been included?), accurate (in terms of data entry, information generated etc) and operational (do all formulae, queries, navigation routes, etc work?).

D1 – Evaluation

As in other units evaluation was generally poorly evidenced. The candidate’s evaluation should demonstrate their understanding of ICT systems analysis and design. This criterion requires feedback from the user(s) on the appearance, ease of use, suitability, etc. The student MUST seek feedback on improvements – even if they feel that it could not have been done better. If they have looked at other commercially produced products then they may be in a better position to be critical of their own. They MUST consider alternative ways of achieving similar results e.g. by using different software, by manual methods, etc.
Unit 6 – Graphics (Y206P)

Please also read the notes on general portfolio issues.

Unit 6 continues to be a very popular unit and most work was of a good Intermediate standard. Assessment was usually accurate and students appeared to have enjoyed their work. Overall some very good material was presented but weak candidates tended to be very poor and would perhaps have fared better on the Foundation programme. For some centres suitable software was unavailable and students were limited in their experience of commercial graphics software.

Most students were better at producing graphics using vector-based software packages than bitmap-based packages. There was good evidence of using vector images, where basic shapes were effectively edited, filled and manipulated, however annotation to show where the different facilities had been used was weak or omitted altogether. Bitmap evidence appeared to be limited to downloading a picture of something from the Internet. Graphics were often converted into bitmap format rather than drawn in a suitable program.

The basic philosophy behind this unit is that students understand the difference between vector-based graphics and bitmap-based graphics and recognise what the software can and cannot do. Unfortunately most students appeared to be unaware of the differences or of the advantages and disadvantages of using the different types of software in their work. Before tackling their summative assessments students do need to be taught the theory from the WYNTL and they should utilise all the tools and techniques listed on pages 88 and 89. Having done that they are then in a better position to select the most appropriate tools for their purpose—and explain why.

This unit is about designing a graphic solution to a problem. It is as much about teaching problem solving skills as it is about producing good quality graphics. Students should be presented with a problem rather than told that they are to produce a number of images.

P1 – Description of the Problem

As in other units this criterion is key to success in the higher grades as well as at Pass level. Students need to spend sufficient time planning their work to ensure they produce graphics that meet the user’s needs.
Unit 7 – Multimedia (Y207P)

Please also read the notes on general portfolio issues.

Unit 7 remains the most popular optional unit and most work was of a good Intermediate standard. Assessment was generally accurate and students appeared to have both enjoyed their work and experienced a variety of multimedia software. Overall some very good material was presented.

Banner - Two Presentations

In a very small number of centres students did not produce two presentations. Occasionally it was difficult to differentiate between individual and group presentations and centres are advised to identify them more clearly. Edexcel or centre-devised checklists were used by a number of centres and this assisted the moderation process significantly. In other centres students appeared to share parts of the project rather than being allocated their own section. The group project is designed to teach the student how important it is (in a commercial sense) for them to complete their task(s) in a team activity. They need to present evidence that they had a clearly identified role that they completed on time.

Banner, P4, M1, M2, D1 – User Interaction, Effective Presentations

Most presentations did not plan for different routes that the user might take. Higher grade students should be encouraged to explore different ways to present their information so that the end product becomes more effective.

P4, P5, M3, Planning, Designing and Testing

As in other units many students are technically quite capable but remain poor at planning and documenting their progress from design / drafting through to testing and refinement of the finished product. Good quality annotations and explanations can raise attainment in these criteria considerably.

Students need to be taught about copyright issues as many are now downloading images and text from existing websites and presenting them as their own work without any consideration of the legal issues surrounding this practice. Discussion of copyright issues can support achievement of the Distinction criterion D3.
Unit 8 – Networks & Communication (Y208P)

Please also read the notes on general portfolio issues.

This is another unit that requires students to actually undertake the setting-up of computer hardware – in this case a simple network. In several instances evidence was not convincing and there remained considerable doubt as to whether the students had actually done what was required. Several students wrote extended essays on network topology – something that is not specifically required by the assessment evidence grid. In one centre the evidence submitted for all the candidates only addressed one pass criterion – P5 the social effects of WANs.

Centres offering this optional unit must ensure that the course is suitably resourced in terms of hardware, software, staff time and expertise. The portfolio of evidence for each student should contain evidence for all the banner requirements and each component part of each criterion.

P1, P2 – Simple Network and 2-way Communication

Some students wrote an observation of a third person constructing a network (eg a tutor demonstration). This was not appropriate, neither was a theoretical description of the way networks could be set up. Candidates must set up the connections and configure the system themselves. Suitable evidence for this might be a step-by-step description of the set up with photographs and a detailed witness statement to identify the work undertaken. The network should function correctly and evidence of its functioning is expected. A witness statement by the assessor and digital photos would ensure complete coverage of this aspect of the unit. A diagram of the network connections and topology could also be included.

Some assignments moderated showed no evidence that the students actually sent and received messages across their networked system. Students must produce evidence through screen prints, photographs and/or detailed witness evidence that the messages have been sent and that a peripheral has been used effectively from all nodes in the network. Student commentary is expected as well as witness evidence.

P3, M2, D2 – Log of LAN and WAN Usage

Many students provided evidence of a limited range of services eg sending emails over a period of a few hours. Relatively few students demonstrated extended use of networks over a longer period.
At Pass level the student log should contain enough detail to prove their understanding of the underlying workings of the network eg using software, sending/receiving/handling messages, accessing files. It should document their use of a range of hardware and software
At Merit level the log should show their use of external services on WANs including the Internet eg, sending/receiving emails with attachments, copying/ transferring files, using search engines, downloading files/images/software. The log must be kept for a reasonable period of time to show competence and to fully explore a range of facilities. Notes in their log can show that they understand the underlying technology.
Observations from their log (eg regarding ftp) could contribute to their report on the social effect of WANs (P5, M4, D4).
At Distinction level the student is expected to look critically at the way they worked, in producing their work log and their report and identify ways of improving the process. Students could evaluate the construction of the work log (headings and layout), and how/when they filled it in. They might include a critique of a supplied work log template.

P4, M3, D3 – User Guide

A relatively high proportion of students produced a guide to setting up a network instead of a user guide. The user guide is designed to allow an inexperienced user to use the constructed network to carry out a range of activities such as the ones identified for P3. It should be a separate document, clearly headed ‘User Guide’ and referring specifically to the network they have created. Narrative and screen shots are expected.
At Merit level the guide should be ordered so that the user can find the information on all services available on the network eg logging on, using networked software, sending messages, transferring files to another node, copying files from another user, how to use the shared peripheral, etc. It might also address security issues such as passwords and user privileges.
At Distinction level the student should evaluate the guide from the point of view of the user and ensure that they check that the instructions are clear and accurate. Use of English should be clear and correctly pitched at the intended audience. Feedback from an inexperienced user would be useful evidence here.

P5, M4, D4 – Report on Social Effect of WANs

These criteria were generally well covered although students aspiring to higher grades were occasionally limited in their attainment by writing frames or too prescriptive a list of effects to be studied. At Distinction students should consider a wide range of social effects (see p 108) amplified with further examples they select. It is important that the student’s opinions are clear in the report and judgements are justified even if they may not correspond with generally accepted ideas.
Unit 9 – Modelling Numerical Information (Y209P)

Please also read the notes on general portfolio issues.

This unit was one of the least popular optional units. The proportion of work that did not meet National Standards was slightly higher than the average so there does still appear to be some difficulties in understanding the requirements. The comments below list the most common errors.

This unit should not be seen as ‘just more spreadsheets’. Both projects that the students work on should be modelling ones i.e. reproduce a system which involves some changing process by applying a specific set of rules to a particular situation in order to predict what will happen. Financial simulations eg break-even analysis or stock control simulations, and simulations of games were popular amongst the small number of entries. There is an expectation that the spreadsheets produced do solve the problem (P1) and are presented to an appropriate standard (P2), but several students failed to meet these criteria.

Banner, P1, P2, M1, D1, D2, D3 – Specialised Functions

Several students failed to evidence appropriate use of the majority of the techniques in List 1 (at least eight of those listed in List 1 on page 117) and three of the techniques in List 2 (including a search). In some centres the problem presented wasn’t complex enough to permit students to use the appropriate number of techniques.

P1 – Description of the Problem

Only a few students were able to fully understand the problem and present it in their own words. The mathematical principles behind the models appeared to be beyond all but the most able of students. These students were able to independently design, create and fully test a suitable solution and evaluate it from the user’s point of view. Few students were able to suggest improvements.

P4, M3, D3 – Team Project

It was occasionally difficult to determine what part the student played in the team project. Sometimes students appeared to be working on the same element of the problem. Apart from identifying their role candidates are also expected to evaluate their role and the role of others in producing a solution to the problem. Students generally found this very difficult.
Unit 10 – Database Techniques & Applications (Y210P)

Please also read the notes on general portfolio issues.

Where centres did this unit there was obviously some knowledge of databases amongst the staff as the work produced was of a good Intermediate standard and generally well-assessed. The comments below list the most common errors.

There is still some confusion about the content of this unit. Some centres appear to think it is ‘just another unit 2’ and concentrate, yet again, on structure, queries, reports etc when they should be building on this knowledge and focusing more on producing commercially-acceptable solutions. In these centres screens were either not evidenced or poorly designed, testing was far from comprehensive, evaluation was weak/non-specific and students had no idea of what a user guide or technical document looked like.

Centres should concentrate on teaching students the skills to produce an effective database that functions as required and has a selection of data entry / query screens that are user-friendly. The Essential Information for Teachers (page 130) contains some useful advice on how to reduce the amount of time that students take on data entry. The banner indicates that three related tables are required. Students are expected to demonstrate understanding of normalisation (page 126).

Good students should be producing an effective functioning database and covering the techniques listed on page 126 of the specification. They will also consider in more detail the interface between user and computer, and incorporate into their designs some of the features listed on page 127. Their documentation will be more professional and these candidates will have produced notes and examples that illustrate what they would include in both technical and user documentation (see page 127). These notes may illustrate the different writing styles they would use for the two documents and there will probably be diagrams/screenshots/printed output that will show how they would illustrate / explain aspects of their database and its use. Testing will be explicitly addressed and candidates will have a good grasp of the range of tests that need to be conducted (page 127-128).
Unit 11 – Programming (Y211P)

Please also read the notes on general portfolio issues.

This unit was one of the least popular optional units. Where centres did this unit there was obviously some programming expertise amongst the staff as the work produced was of a good Intermediate standard and generally well-assessed. The comments below list the most common errors in a small sample of work.

**Banner – Three Scenarios**

A proportion of students failed to provide evidence for three modifications. In these cases students could not achieve a Pass grade. In one centre students created, not modified, two programs from scratch. Students are required to modify programs designed by someone else; they are not expected to design a programme from scratch. They are expected to test that their modifications work and clearly document their changes. Candidates are expected to produce programs that include sequence, selection, and iteration and centres *must* therefore ensure that they provide students with three suitable scenarios with new criteria for programs - in accordance with page 139 of the specifications (essential information for teachers).

**P2, P3, M1, M5, D1, D2 - Documenting Modifications and Testing**

Only the best students were able to organise their work to clearly document the process of designing, modifying and testing the three programs. In these cases their designs showed evidence of sequence, selection and iteration, structure charts, pseudo code or data flow diagrams were provided and the students documented their work with plenty of screenshots. Their test documentation showed a good understanding of test procedures.
Unit 12 – Computer-Aided Design (Y212P)

Please also read the notes on general portfolio issues.

This unit was the least popular of all the optional units. The comments below identify the most common errors in a very small sample of work.

Banner – Computer-Generated Drawings
Those centres that presented work for moderation were generally able to provide their students with access to appropriate software. In one instance this was through a work-related project in an off-site location.

Students are required to produce a minimum of three drawings – one plan, one 3D model and one illustration. The better projects viewed the unit as a commercial project for one client, the portfolio being presented to the client on an agreed deadline. In such scenarios students must then focus on the quality of their finished product and on explaining to a third person how they arrived at their final designs (one centre had a real client - students used presentation software to explain the realisation of their ideas). Poorer projects merely instructed the candidates to produce three separate, non-related drawings and students did not demonstrate a consistent quality or style in the method of presentation. Students are required to present their CAD drawings using current industry standard conventions (i.e. as described in BS 308 / BS 8888). This must include the use of either a first or third angle projection drawing. Students may also produce an isometric or oblique perspective drawing in order to achieve the higher grade.

P1, P2 – Techniques
Whilst they are not expected to use all the CAD, image manipulation and 3D model tools listed on p 143-145 they should be able to use the majority of them – and at least converse about them in their planning. A very small number of centres failed to produce any evidence for image manipulation.

This unit is about designing a graphic solution to a problem. It is as much about teaching problem solving skills as it is about producing good quality graphics. Students should be presented with a problem rather than told that they are to produce a number of images.

M2 – Accuracy
Students need to produce clear evidence that they have constructed their drawing object/s using specific techniques to obtain accuracy of dimensions. Evidence of this can be achieved by annotated screen grabs showing the input commands of the co-ordinate system used at various stages of the design. The production of the drawing should show any scale, ratio and dimensions applied to the CAD drawings.