

NQF unit:

IT Applications and Skills (ITAS)

Examination Session:

June 2015

Introduction/General comments:

Of the 26 candidates from 4 centres in Botswana 11 achieved at least a pass (42%), which is a higher proportion to the previous session (29.4%). 6 achieved 50% or more (23%) and 0 achieved 75% or more (0%). The average percent of the marks for each question varied from 15% (database) to 54% (e-mail).

Question 1:

46% of the candidates scored a pass mark or above on this question.

- (a) (i) *State the name and version of a word processing program that you are familiar with.*
- (ii) *For the word processing program you specified above describe two different methods of inputting capital letters e.g. A B C D E F.*
- (iii) *For the word processing program you specified above explain how to input frequently used symbols e.g. ! " £ \$ % ^ & * () within a word processed document.*
- (iv) *For the word processing program you specified above explain how to input specialised symbols e.g. ✓ ✕ ☐ within a word processed document.*

Most candidates were able to identify a suitable word processing program but some marks were lost because of the inability to give the version e.g. Microsoft Word 2013.

Similarly most candidates gave suitable methods of inputting capital letters and symbols.

Few candidates gave a suitable method of inputting specialist symbols e.g. Insert - Symbol, switch to the Wingdings font and select the desired character.

- (b) *The word processing commands Save and Save As are very important. Describe the similarities and differences between these two commands.*

Most candidates achieved some marks but few gave sufficient detail for full marks e.g. both save a document to specific location with a name. Few candidates indicated that if a document was already saved then the Save command would update the previously saved file whereas Save As allows the user to specify a new name or location or both.

- (c) *Sophisticated word processing programs allow users to create macros. Explain what macros are and give an example of how a macro could be used in a word processing program.*

Few candidates identified that macros are small programs used to automate tasks e.g. printing two copies of a document - 1 for sending and 1 for filing.

To achieve the 8 marks required to pass this question it was probably easiest to get half of the available marks for parts (a) and (b) by stating the name and version of the word processing software, describing how to use the Shift and Caps Lock keys to get capital letters and symbols and by explaining what the Save and Save As commands do.

Question 2:

35% of the candidates scored a pass mark or above on this question.

- (a) (i) *State the name and version of a spreadsheet program that you are familiar with.*
- (ii) *With the above spreadsheet program already loaded describe how to create a new spreadsheet file from within that program.*
- (iii) *With the above spreadsheet program already loaded describe how to open a previously saved spreadsheet file from within that program.*

Many candidates were able to identify a spreadsheet program but fewer were able to state the version e.g. Microsoft Excel 2013. Similarly many candidates were able to describe how to create a new spreadsheet from within the program e.g. File - New or via a keyboard shortcut such as Ctrl + N. Fewer candidates were able to explain the process of opening a file from within the program e.g. File - Open, navigate to the file and double click it

- (b) *For the spreadsheet program you stated in (a)(i) describe how to display all formulas simultaneously, so that a printout can be produced showing all of the spreadsheet's formulas in full.*
- Few candidates achieved credit for this part of the question. It was expected that candidates would

describe how to display the formulas (e.g. Formulas - Show Formulas) and then describe how to adjust the column widths so that all formulas can be seen in full.

(c) (i) For the spreadsheet program you stated in (a)(i) describe how to preview how the spreadsheet will look when it is printed.

(ii) For the spreadsheet program you stated in (a)(i) describe how to insert page numbers to appear in the footer of each printed page.

Many candidates were able to describe how to access the Print Preview for (i) e.g. File - Print Preview. Few candidates achieved all credit for describing the process of adding page numbers e.g. Insert - Header & Footer, Page Number.

(d) For the spreadsheet program you stated in (a)(i) describe the steps a user needs to follow to create a macro.

Few candidates achieved marks on this part of the question. It was expected that the process of recording a macro would be described e.g. Click the Macro Recording button, name the macro, assign a shortcut key, use the mouse and keyboard to perform the required steps, click the Stop recording button and test the macro out.

To achieve the 8 marks required to pass this question it was probably easiest to give sufficient detail for each part of (a) e.g.

(i) Microsoft Excel 2013 (ii) Click the File menu, select the New option and click Blank Workbook

(iii) Click the File menu, select the Open option, navigate to the location of the workbook and double click the appropriate file.

Question 3:

8% of the candidates scored a pass mark or above on this question.

(a) (i) State the name and version of a database management system you are familiar with.

(ii) With a database file already loaded, in the database management system you have stated above, describe how to input and save new data records.

(iii) With a database file already loaded, in the database management system you have stated above, describe how to preview data records and modify settings to ensure that when printed they will appear on paper as required.

Many candidates were able to state the name of a database program but the second mark was often lost because a version was not specified e.g. Microsoft Access 2013.

In (ii) few candidates achieved much credit. It was expected that there would be a description of opening a table or form, navigating to a new record (e.g. click the New Record button), inputting the data and saving the record (e.g. click the Save Record button).

In (iii) few marks were achieved due to lack of suitable detail. To get full credit the answer needed to explain how to open the appropriate database object (report/table), perform a print preview to check whether it will print out as expected, make adjustments as required - margin sizes, orientation, field widths etc.

(b) The use of database forms can make data input easier, faster and reduce user data input errors. Describe or draw an annotated sketch of features that can be incorporated into a form's design to make it easy to use and reduce user input errors.

Little credit was achieved on this part of the question due to lack of suitable features identified.

Sketches tended to show a tabular layout, which has no benefit over inputting data directly into a table. Credit was achieved for features such as the following:

Title - explaining what the form is for

Instructions - explaining how to use the form

Drop-down lists/combo boxes to limit/guide data input

Buttons - for performing operations such as saving, new record etc.

Tab controls - to simplify complex forms

Labelled boxes - to break up the form into logical sections and improve navigation

(c) Reports are usually designed to provide summary information from a database either to be printed out or viewed on screen. Describe or draw an annotated sketch of features that a report designed for printing should incorporate to make it easily understandable.

Again little, if any credit was achieved by the majority of candidates. Credit was achieved for features such as the following:

Data sorted by field/s in a logical order e.g. Surname then Forename

Grouping of data under categories e.g. product type
 Summary data figures e.g. subtotals, totals, averages etc.
 Repeating headers and footers e.g. group title, page number, date printed
 Lines e.g. to separate headings from data, groups from each other etc.
 To achieve the 8 marks required to pass this question it would probably be easiest to get the 2 marks for identifying the version of a database management software program e.g. Microsoft Access 2013
 3 marks for explaining how to input data e.g. double click the appropriate table or form, click the New Record button, input the required data and click the Save Record button and 3 marks for describing how to preview and print data records e.g. double click the appropriate table or report, click File - Print and select Print Preview, modify the settings as required such as reducing the size of the margins, changing the orientation to landscape, adjusting field widths and so on.

Question 4:

62% of the candidates scored a pass mark or above on this question. On average candidates achieved the highest proportion of the marks in this question (54%).

- (a) (i) *Explain what problems junk e-mail (sometimes called spam) can cause a business.*
- (ii) *Describe the measures that staff responsible for an organisation's e-mail systems should implement to minimise the negative effects of spam.*
- (iii) *Describe what steps a worker within a business should take to minimise the chances of infecting their organisation with a computer virus.*

Most candidates achieved some credit for identifying suitable negative effects of junk e-mail. Fewer achieved full marks for describing the steps that should be taken by the e-mail systems manager - many candidates focussed on the role of individual e-mail users and did not achieve credit for covering features such as the organisational use of spam filters, appropriate staff training, policies to prevent the use of organisation e-mail for personal correspondence etc. In (iii) a number of candidates achieved all of the marks for suitable answers regarding caution around junk e-mail, the potential dangers of certain web sites, the use of anti-virus software to scan files and being careful with the use of portable storage media.

- (b) (i) *Give examples of the benefits of zipping files before you e-mail attachments.*
- (ii) *Outline the key steps involved in zipping one or more files in a folder.*

A number of candidates achieved some credit for correctly identifying that zipping file/s reduces their size and so decreases the time taken to upload and download attachment files but few indicated that by zipping a folder many files can be sent using 1 attachment. Many candidates achieved some credit in (ii) by referring to placing all of the files to zip in one place, using a right click option and Send To.

To achieve the 7 marks required to pass this question it is probably easiest to give two examples for each part of (a) along with one benefit for (b) (i) e.g.

- (a)
 - (i) spam can cause a virus infection, it takes up time and can lead to important messages ending up in the junk mail box
 - (ii) e-mail administrators should use of spam filters, arrange appropriate staff e-mail training and implement policies to prevent the use of organisation e-mail for personal correspondence
 - (iii) Delete e-mails from unknown/unexpected senders, scan any attachments to e-mail messages before opening them and be cautious with clicking any link in an e-mail
- (b)
 - (i) zipping reduces the size of attachments, which means they upload and download more quickly and if you are sending multiple files zipping them in to one archive can save time.

Question 5:

31% of the candidates scored a pass mark or above on this question.

- (a) (i) *Explain what a mail merge is and include in your answer an example of how a business could use one.*
- (ii) *Describe the steps that need to be followed in order to perform a mail merge.*

Many candidates achieved credit for giving some explanation of what a mail merge was but fewer were able to give a business example of its use and a number of candidates achieved few marks in (ii) - to achieve more credit the key steps required in the mail merge process needed to be outlined.

(b) Describe how to insert a hyperlink into a document.

Many candidates achieved some credit for at least one step in the process of inserting a hyperlink. To achieve the 5 marks required to pass this question it is best to outline what a mail merge is and give a business example for at least 2 marks and then give at least 3 of the steps to follow when e-mailing e.g.

(a)(i) A mail merge is the combination of a data source e.g. names and contact (e-mail) addresses with a standard document e.g. letter to produce e-mails or letters customised with details relevant to the recipients e.g. a bank sending a letter informing customers about changes in interest rates.

(ii) Firstly the data source needs to be created in a database/spreadsheet/word processed table, then the standard document e.g. letter or e-mail message needs to be created then the standard document needs to be linked to the data source, the merge fields need to be inserted into the standard document and finally the merge needs to be completed to generate the letters/e-mails.

Question 6:

27% of the candidates scored a pass mark or above on this question.

(a) (i) Explain what the 'front-end' of an IT system is, illustrating your answer with a suitable business example.

(ii) Explain what the 'back-end' of an IT system is.

A number of candidates were unable to explain that the front-end of an IT system is the user interface e.g. a sales website and so lost significant credit. Similarly credit was lost for not outlining that the back-end of an IT system is composed of the systems that process the user input, that is not seen by the user and it includes some form of database that stores the appropriate inputs.

(b) List the essential data a customer needs to input in order to successfully complete an online purchase.

Many candidates achieved at least some credit for this part of the question by correctly identifying some of the following types of data are required - customer details (name, address, date of birth, e-mail address, telephone number/s), product details (product name/code, size, quantity), delivery details (address, shipping method, delivery date), payment details (card type, number, expiry date, code), special instructions (wrapping, what to do if the recipient is not in etc.).

To achieve the 5 marks required to pass this question it is probably easiest to give 5 examples of the types of data a customer needs to complete an online purchase e.g. the customer's details, the products and quantities they want, where they want the products sent to and the shipping method, details of their payment method and any special instructions.

Conclusions:

The pass rate has increased to 42% compared to 29.4% in December 2014 but there are 8 fewer candidates. As with previous sessions candidates with most familiarity of the syllabus content have achieved the highest marks.

Recommendations to students and tutors for future examinations:

In line with previous advice it is recommended that candidates fully learn the syllabus content and lecture guide. In particular database needs particular attention.