

Introduction

Inappropriate choices for project topics, lack of thoroughness in attempting various sections, failure to complete the projects, and increased levels of plagiarism were just but a few of the indicators that predominantly impacted the quality of candidates' work.

Some candidates followed the syllabus rubric and presented detailed original work. A sizeable number of teachers from certain centres thoroughly supervised candidates' work, as is expected. In most cases, at such centres, the teachers also used the syllabus rubric closely when marking, thereby improving marking standards, fairness, and consistency. Such accuracy and diligence from these teachers and candidates is highly applaudable.

General Comments

In most centres, clear signs of decline in quality of candidates' work in comparison to last year were observed. With the exception of a few centres, there was however a slight improvement in the level of marking. Creative and outstanding work was also presented this year by some candidates.

At some centres the teachers still seemed to inappropriately award marks to candidates and in such centres, the majority of candidates would not provide even the minimum requirements of content in certain sections as prescribed by the assessment rubric provided in the syllabus but yet awarded full marks in these sections. Teachers must diligently use the assessment rubric that is provided in the syllabus when marking Continuous Assessment projects.

(a) Completion of Continuous Assessment Projects:

It was also clear that candidates from some centres could not complete the Continuous Assessment project and therefore would not attempt some stages or the attempts were incomplete. Candidates who start early enough and dedicate more time to the projects primarily produce high-end products. Candidates who start late or do not dedicate adequate time to the projects have poor end products. Teachers are strongly advised to make sure that learners start with their projects in Grade 10 already as Computer Studies is a two-year syllabus.

(b) Assessment rubric interpretation:

Assessment rubric interpretation remains crucial. When a teacher does not interpret the assessment rubric to the expected standards, the teacher will not award candidates the marks they deserve. This is either through over-awarding or under-awarding marks to unacceptable levels. Therefore, teachers should get ongoing mentorship from educational officers or colleagues who are well skilled and experienced in Continuous Assessment for Computer Studies at this level. Additionally, in case your subject advisor or educational officer does not specialise in Computer Studies, which is a common occurrence, the teacher should try soliciting help using alternative routes such as online collaborative platforms, among others.

(c) Rigorous guide to candidates:

Teachers should be more vigilant with candidates' CA projects from day one to the last day of submission. This should be through rigorous revision and pre-assessment of the project work of candidates. It was clear that many candidates had no idea what to do in specific sections, and they left out many sections. Teachers must guide learners through the entire project and give suggestions for improvement as much as possible. By no chance this approach does not parallel doing the project for the candidates.

Teachers are advised to guide learners on all the topics (sections) included in the project. Each topic (section) should be discussed and handled thoroughly with learners. Give target dates and then check on the learner's progress on the set dates. This will ensure that the teacher can see where learners are struggling and require assistance and guidance before it is too late. Whenever possible, let the learners' parents or guardians be aware of the project as it helps you (the teacher) with home monitoring or follows ups.

Find and apply innovative techniques to motivate your candidates throughout the CA project duration. As a maiden project for most candidates, this is probably the most challenging and intense project that candidates embark on. As a life-long educator, your guide will go a long way in their academic journey, and as such, it should be given the respect and value it deserves.

(d) Continuous Assessment Project Topics:

Teachers are also expected to guide the learners with appropriate project topics or ideas. It was clear that some learners chose projects which had nothing to do with solving problems that solicit them to showcase skills or approaches that they learn in Computer Studies. Attempting such projects defies the main objectives of the Computer Studies syllabus and is therefore unacceptable. Furthermore, teachers are also recommended to discourage learners from the same centre from working on the same project topics or ideas. Creative and unique project topics or ideas will stimulate learners to develop innovative project end products while promoting independence.

(e) Caution against plagiarism:

Warn learners about plagiarism and copying from the internet as well as from one another. In the future, when work is plagiarised or copied either from the internet or from another learner, no marks will be allocated for this work AND it might even be considered as incomplete especially where evidence can be found of copying or plagiarism. Teachers should be more vigilant and rigorous in checking for originality of candidates' work.

If the teacher is unsure whether specific learners have copied or plagiarised from the internet or otherwise and the learners cannot present reasonable solution to the problem, seek help from your subject advisor or educational officer. If copying or plagiarism, etc. should be the case, **you (the teacher) should be able to pick this up fairly early.** Since you start in grade 10 already and assess different sections of the project REGULARLY, guide the learner to redo this section (topic) or start over. **DO NOT LET COPYING OR PLAGIARISM OF PROJECT INFORMATION (from the internet or otherwise) GO ON FOR TOO LONG,** the longer **you (as the teacher)** wait the worse it becomes.

Encourage candidates to submit sections at set dates and discourage sudden or complete change of topics towards the end as this normally means gross plagiarism or 'resurrecting' past projects. Also keep copies of candidates sectional submission so that you have proof and can check against this.

Specific sections

(a) Objectives:

The Objectives section is a key pinnacle of the entire project. The Business related and Computer related Objectives should be SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timeous). It benefits the learners in big ways if the teacher guides them intensively on setting up SMART objectives as these determine the quality of the entire project. Remember the learners most likely are doing this for the first time and it may take time and effort for them to grasp the concept well enough. In most cases, poorly outlined objectives mean that even if the project takes off, the end product will also be of poor quality. The converse is also true.

(b) Action Plan:

The action plan should, in all instances, be clearly related to the objectives and the Gantt chart should reflect what is set-out in the action plan. Detailed description of each stage should also be included. Like in yester years, it was a common pitfall that the Gantt chart presented, did not correctly depict the time spent on the various stages as shown in the detailed action plan. It was also common that some candidates did not provide the detailed description of what each staged represented in the action plan covers and therefore could not score full marks even if the correct Gantt chart was provided. Furthermore, this year plagiarism was rife on this section. Teachers should be particularly more vigilant.

(c) Hardware and software requirements:

Hardware and Software requirements should be related to THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE PROPOSED SOLUTION, not general requirements to use a computer application. It should be made clear to learners that they should identify the **hardware and software used to create the system in the Technical Documentation and the hardware and software needed to run the system in the User Documentation.** Although there was an improvement on this section in comparison to past years, some learners did not justify their choice(s) of the hardware and software in the contexts of the proposed solution as expected.

It is also important for teachers to be extra vigilant with these sections as plagiarism is rife. Teachers are encouraged to enforce candidates to provide specific hardware and software requirements rather than general hardware or software requirements. This way, plagiarism will be easy to identify and will therefore be discouraged.

(d) Design of method of solution:

The Design Method of Solution section requires learners to clearly show how the learner designed each module of the system. A link from the Separate Modules section should be put to use thereby simplifying the candidates work. There should be clear evidence of all modules, tables, forms, relationships, design view of queries, reports of the proposed solution etc. The entire system should be covered, including the Main Menu.

(e) Testing:

Testing of the proposed solution should involve test strategies for Input, Processing and Output of the proposed system. Most learners focused on Input only. Queries (parameter and action, where entries are made and a process takes place) can also be used for testing a type of data.

Teachers should also fairly award marks in consistence with the syllabus rubric.

(f) User documentation

User documentation should be CLEAR. There are several guides on what should be included in the user documentation. It should have a separate front page, index, introduction, problem description, etc. User documentation should guide the user STEP BY STEP on how to use EVERY FEATURE AND BUTTON, etc. of the proposed solution.

(g) Technical documentation:

Learners should be made aware that they create their OWN CUSTOMISED VALIDATION RULES WITH ORIGINAL AND CUSTOM-MADE ERROR MESSAGES. System error messages cannot be accepted.

Conclusion

Both seasoned and new teachers are advised to familiarise themselves with the assessment criteria interpretation as well as assessment methods used for the project work before marking the projects. Try to reach out to your experienced peers and challenge yourself to always learn and improve yourselves. Good teachers avoid professional isolation and should therefore seek help from the more experienced teachers or subject advisors.

Collaboration among peers is encouraged as it curbs the challenges of space and time. Online collaborative methods proved doable and beneficial during pandemic times e.g. WhatsApp, Google Groups etc. Perhaps such methods should be used even more often beyond pandemic times.

The overall standard of the project work and internal project moderation was acceptable, but there are still some areas which need to be addressed as soon as possible.