



## **General Certificate of Education**

# **Applied Information and Communication Technology 8751, 8753, 8756 & 8759**

**IT15            Supporting ICT Users**

## **Report on the Examination**

*2007 examination - June series*

Further copies of this Report are available to download from the AQA Website: [www.aqa.org.uk](http://www.aqa.org.uk)

Copyright © 2007 AQA and its licensors. All rights reserved.

#### COPYRIGHT

AQA retains the copyright on all its publications. However, registered centres for AQA are permitted to copy material from this booklet for their own internal use, with the following important exception: AQA cannot give permission to centres to photocopy any material that is acknowledged to a third party even for internal use within the centre.

Set and published by the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance.

## Introduction

This was the first session with availability of all of the units for both the user and practitioner awards at A2 and the second session for AS. The general standard of work seen across the AS units showed a definite improvement over the last session. The general standard of work across the A2 units was very pleasing with much creative work seen and clear indications that candidates with a wide range of abilities are succeeding with this Specification. This of course is inevitably not true of all candidates. Many centres should be congratulated on their approach to these courses as they have embraced the meaning of Applied ICT. Some centres, however, do need to consider the approaches taken to some of the units so that they can help candidates to attain the best possible marks. Centres are encouraged to make full use of the advice, materials, such as the Teachers Guide, and training available to them and to attend the feedback meetings for the A2 units and standardisation meetings that will be held in Autumn 2007 for both AS and A2 units.

## Unit 15: Supporting ICT Users (IT15)

### General comments

As mentioned in the general introduction this was the first session when the full A2 Single and Double Award was available to candidates. Work was seen across nearly all Units that achieved the full range of marks.

It is important for centres to realise that there is a change in demand for candidates undertaking the A2 units, over that expected as AS level. The level of demand of the AS assessment is that expected of candidates half-way through a full A-Level course of study. The A2 units, set at a higher level than AS, are designed to assess knowledge, understanding and skills expected of candidates who have completed the second half of a full Advanced Level qualification.

There is also a difference in emphasis between the AS and A2 on Assessment Objectives. Emphasis in the A2 is on processes involved in producing a solution, rather than the solution itself. This means that double the marks are allocated to AO4 (28 marks) than at AS and 17 or 18 mark are allocated to AO3.

Because of the increased emphasis on processes, it is important for candidates to see the piece of work undertaken as a whole, not just as a series of sub-tasks. Where Centres had presented candidates with a given piece of work, or assignment, that was broken down into a series of mini-assignments the work presented was not coherent and often limited the marks that the candidates could obtain. It is also not in the spirit of the Specification for candidates to carry out work in this way, as it prevents them from experiencing the whole process of producing a solution for a client and makes the work produced very mechanistic.

28 marks are available for AO4 in each of the A2 units. Candidates are only able to achieve 1 mark for time management and planning unless they have included an estimate of the time they anticipate that they will require in order to complete each of the tasks they have planned to do. At AS level the candidates should have learnt the rudiments of time planning, and by A2 should be able to quantify the amount of time required for different parts of their work. It was particularly disappointing that candidates appeared unable to build on their experience at AS level in order to provide evaluation criteria that they could clearly identify as quantitative and qualitative. By the time candidates reach A2 level they should be able to create evaluation criteria that allow them to assess whether they have met the needs of the client. Test strategies and plans were weak throughout – especially on the units where there is no tangible product to test. Candidates need to consider how to test a non-working model and how to test a design.

### General remarks about A2 portfolios

A well organised portfolio is easy to assess and moderate. Few portfolios had an accurate contents page; many had no headers or footers on the work included; many did not distinguish between different parts or sections of work. Consecutive page numbering from the beginning to the end of the portfolio is essential for accurate recording of assessment decisions.

The portfolios should contain only the evidence required for assessment against the marking grids, with witness statements included at the point where they are supporting the evidence. Many candidates included lots of unnecessary material – including copies of teacher-set assignments, sets of notes and class work, which did not gain any marks.

## Unit 15: Supporting ICT Users (IT15)

The unit is based on setting up and running a user support service for an identified group of users. Also required is a system for recording the problems, a user guide to accessing the support service and a help sheet for a commonly used software or hardware problem, for instance “How to use tables in MS Word”

Again the AOs are not necessarily in the most logical order. AO2 is where the student identifies their users and describes the current support service in use. AO3 is the design of the support service they are going to provide, including a method of recording any problems, all work done and logging and cataloguing problems. AO1 is the actual service, where the student offers support to users with problems, fixes the problems, tells the user what they’ve done, records the problems and its solution, working in a safe and systematic way, plus identifies an area that would benefit from a help sheet and so produces one.

Unfortunately, many candidates did complete their portfolios in the logical way – some failed to do any real practical work at all, some used a set of centre-given problems and used the current school/college logging system to record them, then tried to reengineer/draft design a simple paper method before appearing to produce a fully written package.

However, many candidates produced excellent work for this unit, their portfolios providing copious evidence of some effective user support services, some within their own establishment, some at other educational establishments and a few in real situations.

### Assessment Objective 1 (17 marks)

Row 1 – Many candidates had a good range of problems that covered the required types, gaining 1 or 2 marks quite easily. For the 3rd mark, there had to be evidence of feedback being given to the users and some did have this evidence, either as a tear-off slip on their forms, or as emails, gaining the 3rd mark.

There were many instances of problem log forms not being completed properly – a brief “PC doesn’t work” as the problem, and a brief, “checked to see if it was plugged in”, is insufficient as a solution; names, ids, dates and time, type of problem, and so on were often left blank.

Many problems were trivial as were the solutions offered – this is not providing a good service and does not show the competence of the support person, hence the requirement for some complex problems.

Row 2 – Many candidates had software installation or uninstallation, or a request that meant both had to be done, plus some sort of software setting request, to gain 1 or 2 marks. The third mark again depended on feedback being evidenced. Some candidates gave evidence that they had installed/uninstalled software and changed settings, but offered no evidence, on a problem request form, that anyone had asked for this to be done.

Row 3 – If the problems were solved, then most gained 1 or 2 marks, but many candidates failed to provide a separate written explanation, so failed to get the 3rd mark.

Row 4 – Many candidates had good clear recording systems that the problems were recorded on, with solutions, gaining 1 or 2 marks. Problems passed onto more expert help were sometimes identified, with no explanation as to why, although some did explain and got the 3rd mark on the row. Some recording systems had a mechanism for organising the problems, a category, a problem ID or a date/time, so that similar problems could be easily picked out. Only

a few stronger candidates produced evidence that this could take place, so only these few gained the 4th mark.

Row 5 – The majority of candidates gained a mark for their help sheet. Most got some feedback from a selection of users and produced a better version for the 2nd mark.

Row 6 – To gain both marks for this row, candidates should have recorded details of the steps they took to work safely with computer equipment – many did not do this, relying on the same folder screenshot. Those who did are advised to also get a witness to undersign that they have worked safely.

### **Assessment Objective 2 (7 marks)**

Row 1 – Most candidates scored on this row with brief or full descriptions of the potential users of their proposed service. A full description should identify when the service would be required (times/days), how quickly is a response required (type of work being done, e.g. if supporting a call centre user, the requirement may be an immediate response as non-working hardware or software might mean that person cannot do their job at all).

Row 2 – Most candidates scored 1 mark on this row for a brief description of user's roles. Better descriptions scored 2 marks.

Row 3 – Many candidates described the current support service only very briefly, or failed to do so at all; others only described their proposed service and only a few said how the proposed service would improve the provision currently in place.

### **Assessment Objective 3 (18 marks)**

Row 1 – Many candidates failed to write up any investigation of the current service, and so could not score on this row. Those that had, and who had then written about their planned new provision, got 2 or 3. If they had checked those plans back with the users of the current service and amended the plans they could get 4 or 5 marks. Very few candidates scored 5 marks.

Row 2 – Some candidates produced designs for a recording system that were partly workable, used them for a few problems and, together with some user feedback, refined the designs until they were satisfied that the recording system covered all aspects required. This would gain the full 4 marks on this row. However, there were some portfolios so badly organised that it was not obvious which were the initial designs, what the feedback was about and how the designs and system had been changed – this was true even for some of the stronger candidates. More care must be taken when putting the portfolio together; feedback questionnaires must be clear and precise, the different drafts must be labelled (version numbers?), and completed problem forms, feedback forms etc might be better put as appendices to the portfolio and summarised.

Row 3 – Many candidates produced a workable guide to the user support service, gaining up to 4 marks for those who scored on this row. Few wrote and justified the design in terms of the needs of the service users. Many did not produce a guide to the support service, but a user guide to using a PC or many items of software. This is not required in this Specification. If the support service is to be accessed via an on-line form, then it was correct to show how to find the form and how to fill it in. Some candidates chose to have the guide as a poster, which gained marks on the next row, but failed to provide all the information required for the guide, which is supposed to contain trouble-shooting ideas to common problems, i.e. the first steps that users can take before asking for further help from the support service.

Row 4 – By “format of a guide” we meant the medium through which it would be dispersed to the potential users of the service, rather than which font and what size and colour font would be used. As the term seemed to be ambiguous, we did allow the misinterpretation to gain a mark in this session. Many candidates did get more than one mark by suggesting posters, or electronic ways of finding the guide (on a CD or put up on the organisation’s intranet etc), and said where it would be kept and why for the higher marks on the row.

#### **Assessment Objective 4 (28 marks)**

Row 1 – Most candidates scored at least 1 mark. Some candidates, in this and many other rows in AO4, concentrated on the system they had produced, rather than the service they had offered, and so gained fewer marks.

Row 2 – many candidates did not put time estimates and detailed task lists with milestones and so gained only 1 mark on this row.

Row 3 – In the absence of any other evidence, the teacher’s mark was taken. Witness statements, matching given planned milestone dates with actual dates achieved, would be useful. Not just teacher’s evidence, but any user meetings, client meetings and so on that can be dated and witnessed.

Row 4 – Many candidates scored 1 or 2 marks on this row by asking for comments about their help sheet and user guide. The higher marks would be gained by also having feedback on all aspects of their service – on the method of contacting, on the method of informing about the problem, on the efficiency of the service provided, response times, effective problem resolution, keeping the problem loggers informed and so on.

Row 5 – candidates mostly scored 1 or 2 marks on this row, failing to include any sort of test plan for their service.

Row 6 – Many candidates failed to score here, by concentrating on their recording system rather than the user support service. Only a few candidates were able to critically evaluate their solution to score the higher marks.

Row 7 – There were many ways to show communication skills in this unit; the help sheet, the user guide, the write-up of problems and feedback to users. Most candidates scored 2 or 3 marks, but many portfolios were not put together in a logical way, which made them difficult to follow.

## Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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