



**General Certificate of Education (A-level)
June 2011**

ICT

INFO4

(Specification 2520)

**Unit 4: Coursework: Practical Issues Involved
in the Use of ICT in the Digital World**

Report on the Examination

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General comments

This was the fourth session that INFO4 work was submitted for moderation. The project reports seen were generally well presented and included evidence for all sections.

Solutions had been developed to a good range of original problems by the candidates; the types of solution included policies, training guides, websites, spreadsheets, database management systems and 'phone apps.

It was pleasing to note that teachers at nearly all centres made good use of the current marking grid provided by AQA. A few teachers used the previous year's grid. Whilst there were few changes to the grid this year, teachers should always download the current grid from http://web.aqa.org.uk/qual/gce/ict/ict_materials.php?id=04&prev=04 and check for any changes, indicated by the side bars at the side of the grid.

Many teachers indicated, for each row on the grid, the mark obtained, provided a page(s) reference where the evidence could be found and a brief commentary as to why a mark had been awarded. Centres are thanked for this as the moderation team found that this information aided the process of moderation.

Background and Investigation

Most candidates provided a full introduction to the organisation investigated that included the type, purpose and size of the organisation, and the scale of operation. Good candidates used the information from their investigations to provide a description of the existing situation. However, only the very best candidates considered the environment that the current system operated in by identifying how this system linked to other systems and procedures both within and external to the organisation.

Candidates had no trouble in identifying their clients but not all candidates realised that they needed to describe their clients, potential users and any audience to obtain top marks. Good candidates used the results of their investigation to identify problems with the current system and then analysed those problems to identify what improvements would be required by their client's organisation and why they were needed.

It was pleasing to see many candidates using appropriate techniques for their investigations and providing good explanations of why these were chosen. Unfortunately some candidates just used an investigation technique(s) to collect evidence and did not then use the information they found to support the conclusions from their investigation.

Analysis and Deliverables

Not all candidates stated the scope of their project, thus failing to identify exactly what areas their solution was to cover and what areas would be outside the developed solution. Nearly all candidates analysed substantial problems and most considered both internal and external constraints.

Nearly all candidates described their proposed system, most identified some deliverables and benefits to the organisation, processes and users' skills that would inform the subsequent design process. Candidates need to clearly identify from their client's requirements what they are going to deliver and when it is required, for example draft designs would be required at an earlier stage than a systems maintenance manual. Better candidates provided evidence to show that their findings had been checked by their client.

Most candidates included qualitative and quantitative evaluation criteria that showed some understanding of how their solution should be assessed but only the best candidates ensured that these matched their client requirements as set out in their Background and Investigation section.

Design

Alternative design solutions to the problem under investigation should be considered. Many candidates just discussed the different types of software available and could gain little credit. Any discussion needs to clearly relate to the problem being solved and can include methods and style of solution, choice of hardware and software, and procedures to be adopted. Better candidates objectively considered their alternative design solutions in relation to their client's requirements.

Most candidates provided a draft design but in order to gain good marks there needs to be evidence that the draft design has been amended in the light of specific comments from the client, not just a short general statement of approval signed by the client. In order to obtain top marks, candidates needed to show that their final design had been approved by their client and also include an explanation of how this final design had met their client's requirements.

The development plans presented by candidates varied in quality – better candidates' plans identified steps for implementation, testing, installation/introduction and training. The best plans clearly related to the candidates' client's requirements and agreed deliverables with agreed deadlines and expected durations for each part of the plan. Whilst the use of Gantt and Pert charts can be useful, they must contain sufficient detail to be meaningful for the reader. Centres should remind candidates that the development plan should show the timeline for the client's solution not the student's project report.

Many candidates included a clear test strategy to show how the effectiveness of their implemented solution would be tested. Few candidates justified why that particular strategy had been chosen. Test plans were usually comprehensive, however as stated in the specification, evidence of functional or unit tests is not required so there is no need to show this type of testing in detail as part of the test plan. The test plan should include sets of planned tests designed to show that both the client requirements and all the evaluation criteria have been met. The tests should cover all the agreed deliverables and involve the client, the user(s) and any audience.

Testing and Documentation

Nearly all candidates included evidence of testing their solution. However, centres are reminded that the specification states 'Testing should concentrate on the testing of complete processes and the system as a whole.' Many candidates showed some testing of the processes that were included as part of their system but very few provided evidence that the solution as a whole had been tested and that it was fit for purpose.

Testing was nearly always undertaken by the candidate but not all reports included evidence of the solution being tested by the client, potential user(s) and any audience.

The documentation produced should be that agreed to be delivered to the client – it could be a user guide, systems maintenance manual, technical documentation or an agreed set of appropriate documents for example a general user guide and a set of 'Getting Going' cards for specific types of user or a set of procedures for regular updating of a security policy. However, there is **no need for the candidate to include an implementation commentary** showing how their solution was developed. As the documentation to be supplied to the client is part of the system developed, it should be tested by the users that it was produced for to ensure it is appropriate for their needs and it meets the client's requirements.

In order for the candidate to obtain top marks the agreed documentation must be of the appropriate type/form (i.e. as agreed with the client), complete and suitable for those who are going to use it.

Some candidates demonstrated that the documentation they provided was appropriate for the people who were going to use it by reviewing the results of the testing completed by the users with that documentation and drawing conclusions from those results.

Evaluation

Better candidates considered their solution as a whole and identified strengths, weaknesses and some areas for improvement.

Most candidates attempted to show that parts of their solution were successful by identifying which of their client's requirements and/or evaluation criteria had been met. However, just stating that a requirement has been met does not constitute a critical evaluation, an explanation of how the requirement was shown to be met, cross referenced to supporting evidence provided in the Testing and Documentation Section should be included.

Most candidates evaluated their own performance; better candidates identified the strengths and weaknesses in the approach they had taken to produce the solution. Only the best candidates analysed what they had done and identified how improvements could be made to future performance.

Report

Most candidates provided a well-structured report that made good use of the software available. A few of the reports seen had been produced to a professional standard and could be awarded top marks.

Centres are reminded that electronic templates must not be provided to be used by the candidates for their reports, as marks are available for organisation and structure. Both teachers and candidates can use the specification and marking grids as guides to the required content and structure of the report. Most candidates ensured that all illustrative material included in their reports was easily readable. However, some reports included some scanned documents and screenshots that were too small to be easily readable.

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Also available is the UMS conversion calculator: www.aqa.org.uk/umsconversion