



General Certificate of Education

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

IT08 Project Management

Report on the Examination

2007 examination - June series

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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 8: Project Management (IT08)

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 8: Project Management (IT08)

This Unit introduces candidates to the skills, techniques and tools involved in managing a project (or part of it) and working as part of a project team.

The project that candidates work on does not have to result in an ICT product, but does have to have a substantial ICT content. Teams consisted of varying numbers of candidates and the project teams often included non-Applied ICT student members and sometimes members of staff or people from outside the Centre. This meant that a very broad spectrum of projects has been carried out, from planning charity events, to setting up websites; from planning weddings to organising school expeditions. The emphasis of assessment is on the processes that occur whilst carrying out the project rather than the end product itself, which allows for some projects coming to fruition after the end of the unit of work, as there may be no end product evident apart from the results of the planning phase.

Evidence for assessment came from team records of activities such as minutes of team meetings, or project planning; other evidence came from individual planning and personal records of activities undertaken. Whilst evidence from collaborative activities is acceptable it is expected that individuals will highlight their own contribution to them or will provide their own interpretation of them. Candidates who did not provide their own interpretation or highlight their part in a group record generally failed to gain the higher marks that were available in some parts of the Marking Grid.

A single piece of evidence can cover a number of rows on the Marking Grid. For example, if the candidate had realised that a useful tool for working collaboratively on documents was the facility in a word-processing package to track changes and had been pro-active in finding out how to do so in a document, has recorded how it was used and used it appropriately then the records that show this could achieve marks on AO1, Rows 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 as well as other rows on the Marking Grid.

Assessment Objective 1 (17 marks)

This section assesses the candidate's acquisition of new skills during the project and whether they were pro-active in their acquisition; their use of new software or software functions during the project; their use of project management tools and standard ways of working.

Row 1 – Most candidates gained marks on this row by providing some evidence of using new software or new features of software. A narrative explanation of why they had needed to use these new features gained many candidates all 3 marks.

Row 2 – Evidence of project management (PM) tools or techniques, such as minutes of meetings, Gantt charts and team communications gained many candidates up to 3 marks on this row. The final mark was awarded if the candidate had explained how their use was appropriate.

Row 3 – Using a before and after skills audit, as many candidates did, gained some marks on this row. Again, further narrative description made the higher marks accessible.

Row 4 – Many candidates failed to prove they had been proactive in acquiring new skills and so failed to gain either of these marks. In order to gain these marks candidates have to show that they have been proactive in acquiring these skills and that it was not a teacher-led process.

Row 5 – If there was evidence of the team having adopted a set of procedures or protocols for communicating, recording progress and so on, and that the candidate had used them during the course of the project, then up to 4 marks was available on this row.

Assessment Objective 2 (7 marks)

This section assesses the candidate's understanding of the roles of the project team; how effectively the team has communicated; whether the candidate has managed part of the project using project management tools and their understanding of what the project is trying to achieve.

Row 1 – the candidate needs to do more than just reiterate a list of job roles to gain marks on this row. Candidates were awarded marks for providing a good description of the different roles and who had been assigned to each.

Row 2 – most candidates achieved this mark by providing evidence of communication, using extracts of e-mails and meeting minutes.

Row 4 – the candidate should provide a description of the project for this row. This should be written in enough detail so that the reader can understand what the basis of the project is for the second mark. Many candidates did not describe the project in enough detail for the second mark to be awarded

Assessment Objective 3 (18 marks)

This section assesses whether the candidate has planned how to use ICT during the project and done so effectively; how the candidate has used their existing skills and knowledge during the project; whether they were able to give ICT support to other team members and how they planned for and responded to problems and unexpected events.

Row 1 – most candidates did not write enough to show their planning of the use of ICT in the project, although there was often a mention of software packages, sufficient to gain 1 mark.

Row 2 – very good evidence was provided by some candidates, often providing support to their colleagues as the project progresses. In many instances candidates got supporting witness statements from the people for whom they had provided this support, as well as describing what they had done. The support provided must be practical, not just the provision of a help sheet. A teacher witness statement is useful to provide information about whether the support was clear and effective (4 marks).

Row 3 – for the higher marks on this row, the team needs to have planned for the unexpected, for example by exchanging contact details or by including contingency time in the overall plan. The majority of candidates achieved two marks, but most did not explain how this planning had taken place and so could not be awarded the third mark.

Rows 4 and 5 – these rows were mostly well-evidenced by the use of before and after skills audits. However, many candidates did not state how the skills had been used in the project. For 1 mark, a simple outline gained the mark. For the second and third marks, there needs to be narrative description or explanation of how these skills and knowledge have been used in the work done for the project

Assessment Objective 4 (28 marks)

As will all A2 units AO4 has 28 marks allocated to it – double the number available in the AS units. Several of the rows require the candidate to refer to the whole project and their part in it and full marks are only available if both of these are done. Assesses the candidate's understanding of team and personal objectives and how the success of these will be assessed; actions taken in undertaking out the project; time management; assessment and critical evaluation of the project; time management and planning (only 4 marks available, compared with 8 in other A2 units); quality of written communication.

Row 1 – although many teams had produced a list of objectives for the project that they were doing, these lists of objectives need to be written in the candidate's own words, even for the lower marks on the grid. Better candidates included personal objectives, for instance successfully taking minutes at a meeting or conducting client interviews. However, many candidates only gained 1 mark on this row.

Row 2 – these are the evaluation criteria for both the project and the part of the project that the candidate is managing and should reflect the objectives given in Row 1. Most candidates provided some evidence of how the assessment was going to be carried out, but few provided clear descriptions for which 3 or 4 marks could be awarded.

Row 3 – most candidates achieved marks on this row, by annotating their plans, keeping a diary, by use of the meeting minutes or by a narrative account.

Row 4 – candidates gained marks on this row by showing that the client had been involved in the project, checking and signing off decisions made by the team. Peer assessment of parts of the project in team meetings, recorded in minutes, also gave evidence for this row. A narrative account, cross-referenced to the objectives and evaluation criteria for the project, in Rows 1 and 2, gained some candidates the higher marks on this row. Some candidates assessed the product rather than the processes of the project and were unable to achieve these marks.

Row 6 – Most candidates gained 2 or 3 marks on this row. In order to gain full marks, the portfolio should be easily understood, logically organised and checked for accuracy of meaning.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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