



General Certificate of Education

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

IT12 Publishing

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 12: Publishing (IT12)

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 12: Publishing (IT12)

This A2 Unit builds on the skills introduced in Unit 1 and extends them to producing a published document, creating a house style and recommending a publishing method for the document.

The product is a published document approximately equivalent to 8 A4 pages, though this is a guide to the complexity of the document rather than a set limit.

Some of the practical work submitted for this unit was of an extremely high standard, with some that could have been published commercially. A substantial number of portfolios were disappointing in their execution and were considered to be more in line with a GCSE standard than an A2 standard. Many candidates appeared to have disregarded what they had learned for Unit 1 and submitted poor design work and very simple finished documents that lacked the complexity and evidence of skills necessary for an A2 unit. Many candidates also originated all elements of their document, though it is envisaged that they would only be assembling the document, with most elements provided by the client.

Logically the portfolio should show the process that is followed, with AO2 being done first, with some elements of AO4; AO3 being done second, along with some elements of AO4; then the evidence of implementation for AO1; finally testing of the product and review and evaluation for AO4. Presenting evidence in this order allows the candidate to see the process as a whole rather than as a disconnected set of events.

Assessment Objective 1 (17 marks)

This section of the assessment considers the candidate's practical ability to use publishing software to create and correct a published document to meet a client's needs. The candidate should provide evidence of using appropriate features of the software and importing appropriate images. There should be evidence of a final version of the document in a format (paper or electronic) appropriate to meet the client needs and the candidate should demonstrate that they have managed their work well.

Row 1 – the majority of candidates had produced an initial version of the document, and most had proofread their document but very few gained other marks on this row by providing evidence of using software tools available within the publishing software to check spelling and grammar. Both need to be shown in order to achieve two or more marks. Some candidates had provided evidence of using software facilities to control such things as widows and orphans, as well as hyphenation to gain the third mark

Row 2 – almost all candidates gained marks on this row for use of facilities such as rulers and grids, snapping, kerning, leading, text justification, hyphenation etc, though some were unable to do so because they had not provided screenshots, annotations or narrative descriptions of the facilities used. Some had not gathered sufficient information about their clients' needs to gain the second mark, but better candidates could explain why they had used the facilities and achieved the third mark.

Row 3 – often candidates did not provide evidence of appropriate resizing, with a large number of images stretched out of proportion, or becoming pixellated as a result of resizing. Good evidence was provided by some candidates showing the original image and the resized image for comparison, or showing the properties of the images. These candidates gained two marks.

Row 4 – although camera ready copy is fast becoming an obsolete term, in this context it is regarded as being a copy that is ready for publishing or reproduction. Bearing in mind the constraints on some centres, moderators gave benefit of the doubt if the final copy was as near as possible to 'camera ready'. In many portfolios candidates provided only a monochrome version of their copy that did not allow the moderator to judge whether the copy was in a format

appropriate for the client needs, a requirement for two marks. Centres are encouraged to provide the facilities necessary for candidates to print a final version in colour where necessary. For three marks it should be possible to see how the document was put together, with all necessary text and images assembled in the template and formatted as necessary. Some candidates specified that their client wanted an electronic copy of the document as well but often did not provide evidence of this copy and so did not achieve the second mark. If a pdf version was required then the candidate should show how this was produced for the third mark

Assessment Objective 2 (7 marks)

This section of the assessment focuses on the candidate's ability to negotiate and agree a house style, form of camera ready copy and implementation schedule with the client; in other words to agree the brief with the client. It is essential that authenticated evidence of agreement is provided.

Row 1 – the implementation schedule should list all the tasks that the candidate will have to carry out in order to produce the published document, in a logical order, and when each task should be completed; there should be evidence that this has been agreed with the client. Many candidates were given benefit of the doubt though there was no authenticated evidence of client involvement. For the second mark the schedule should be complete.

Row 3 – in this session candidates were awarded the first mark if they had either researched previously published documents to identify house styles or had researched forms of camera ready copy. Many candidates, however, did not identify the house style used in the documents researched and so did not gain the first mark. For the second mark candidates needed to provide evidence of discussions that had taken place with the client about house styles. Often these discussions were not authenticated and were too simplistic to warrant a mark. For the third mark very detailed work is required and candidates who only agreed a colour for the text and that the logo would appear on every page were unable to achieve this mark.

Assessment Objective 3 (18 marks)

This section of the assessment focuses on whether the candidate understands the needs of the client and can produce design work that meets those needs, planning in advance what formatting will be necessary to produce the document in the software to be used. It also assesses the candidate's understanding of the house style used and the costs of production using the most appropriate method for the client.

Row 1 – many candidates gained two or more marks but failed to gain the third because they had not included enough detail. This also led to candidates not being able to gain the highest marks on other rows where they had to explain how they had met the client needs. There is a list of questions that may be asked, in Section 18.7 of the Teacher's Guide, that will allow the candidate to gather sufficient detail.

Row 2 – marks achieved by candidates depended on how thoroughly they had investigated the client needs. For one mark the outline sketches were quite simple, but gave an impression of what the document would look like. For two marks the sketches gave a good idea of what the finished document would look like. Many candidates achieved this mark, but few gave sufficient details of the client needs to achieve the third mark and very few produced sketches that were sufficiently clear that the document could be accurately implemented, for the fourth mark.

The designs were often annotated to show some of the formatting required and candidates who did this gained at least one mark on Row 3, but very few provided sufficient detail for the second mark. The detail required is a description of what formatting is required in order to implement the document. Candidates who achieved this mark by describing the layout grids to be used,

text justification, paragraph styles to be created, drop capitals to be used, drop shadows for images and so on, were often able to achieve the third mark by referring back to their discussions with the client. Those candidates who described all the formatting necessary for a third party to be able to implement the document were able to achieve the fourth mark.

Row 4 ties in with the final row of AO2 and marks awarded here were largely dependent on how well the house style and client needs were specified. Candidates who had provided very little information about the house style to be used were usually unable to gain more than the first mark and those who had not gathered much information about the client needs were not able to gain more than two marks.

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. Similar things are being assessed as at AS level, but in much greater depth and detail. Only one mark can be achieved on time planning if no estimates of time required are included.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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