



General Certificate of Education

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

IT15 Supporting ICT Users

Report on the Examination

2010 examination – June series

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Unit 15: Supporting ICT Users (IT15)

Most portfolios sampled during moderation had been assessed accurately. It was noticeable that candidates who had the opportunity to actually run a real user support service over a period of time often gathered good evidence for their portfolio and generally achieved higher marks. Running the service, reflecting on it, resulting in evaluation and improvement is required in order to access the higher marks on many of the rows of the marking grid for this unit.

This unit is based on setting up and running a user support service for an identified group of users. Also required is a system for logging and recording the problems, a user guide to accessing the support service and a help sheet for a commonly encountered software or hardware problem (for instance “How to create pivot tables in MS Excel”).

Many candidates produced excellent work for this unit, their portfolios providing copious evidence of some effective user support services, some within their own establishment in resource centres, some at other educational establishments and a small minority in real business situations.

Some candidates expended a large amount of effort on setting up questionnaires for every single item that they produced, with copious alternative drafts of problem logging sheets or user guide designs. Candidates should be encouraged to focus only on the rows that mention feedback from users to gather this type of feedback. Often client evaluation and some personal proof-reading is enough – with evidence of the changes made, though these should be more substantial than superficial font or colour changes.

Unfortunately, many candidates did not complete the portfolio in the logical way – some failed to do any real practical work at all, some used a set of centre-given problems and some did not produce a useful way to record ICT problems and their solutions at all.

AO1 – Providing User Support service - Practical work

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 this feedback should be on-going (informing them of progress towards resolution), unless the solution is immediate.

Many problems were trivial, as were the solutions offered. In many instances this did not show that a good service had been provided and did not show the competence of the support person. There is a requirement for some complex problems to be included. A complex problem is defined as one which requires more than one simple step to fix the problem.

Row 2 – Many candidates had provided examples of problem solving requiring software installation or uninstalling, or examples of a request that meant both had to be done, plus some sort of software setting request, to gain 1 or 2 marks. Installation or uninstalling and software setting must be done to gain the 1st mark. The third mark again depended on feedback being evidenced.

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

Row 4 – Many candidates had good clear recording systems that they had used to record the problems and their solutions, gaining 1 or 2 marks. Problems referred for more expert help were sometimes identified, with no explanation as to why, although some did explain this and gained 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 like 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 when providing the user support service – many did not do this. Centres are advised to also provide a witness statement to authenticate candidates' statements on this matter.

A02 – User aspects

Rows 1 & 2 are separate items. Users (and client) should be properly identified. Only those who are likely to use the support service are users – these could be people reporting problems, people administering the system (e.g. school technicians), people providing the support service, people reviewing the types of problems encountered (e.g. Network Manager).

Row 1 – Most candidates scored on this row with brief or full descriptions of the potential users of their proposed service.

Row 2 – Most candidates scored 1 mark on this row for a brief description of users' roles. Fuller 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 and so gained the full marks.

A03 – Planning & Designing a User support service

Row 1 – Many candidates failed to write up any investigation of the current service, and so could not score marks on this row. Those that had, and who had then written about their planned new provision, gained 2 or 3 marks. If they had checked their plan with the users of the current service and made necessary amendments to the plans they could get 4 or 5 marks. See comments about the time plan at AO4 Row 2 below for an idea of what is required in AO3. This row overarches all other rows in AO3 – it concerns the complete service.

Row 2 assesses the problem recording sheet and Row 3 the recording/cataloguing system. Most candidates scored on both rows and those who had refined their designs after use and evaluation could get the highest marks

Row 4 – Many candidates produced a workable guide to the user support service, gaining right up to 4 marks. Few wrote and justified the design in terms of the needs of the service users for the 5th mark. A few candidates did not produce a guide to the support service, but a user guide to using a PC or items of software. If the support service is to be accessed via an on-line form, then it is correct to show how to find the form and how to fill it in.

Row 5 – The format of the guide is the medium through which it would be disseminated to the potential users of the service. A short discussion of formats is required at the design stage for the first mark. Without this, the second mark cannot be awarded.

A04

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 into their plans and so gained only 1 mark on this row. Start and end dates for individual tasks are not needed. It may be helpful if milestone dates are included – agreed dates for interviews, for delivering parts of the portfolio to a teacher etc.

The list of tasks should cover all steps taken to provide evidence for the portfolio. As an example of the part of the plan relevant to AO3 Row 1, many candidates called this 'planning the service' without recognising that the actual tasks involved might be –

1. Compose a questionnaire about the current support service
2. Give out questionnaire to 10 potential users
3. Collect questionnaires in
4. Compose interview question for current ICT technician/Network Manager
5. Interview ICT Technician/Network Manager
6. Write up interview
7. Check finding back with interviewee
8. Write up investigation
9. Identify the need and draft plan a new support service**
10. Send a draft planning document to 5 users and ICT technician/network Manager and ask for their opinions
11. Collate responses and decide what needs changing
12. Amend service plan

Notes:

Tasks 1-7 may have been done as part of AO2

**Task 9 could also be expanded to include the steps required to design the problem logging sheet, the problem/solution recording system and the user guide – with all their included tasks.

Row 3 – Witness statements, matching given planned milestone dates with actual dates achieved, would be useful evidence of having kept to the time plan.

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 owners informed of progress and so on.

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

Row 6 – Many candidates failed to score here, through concentrating on evaluating 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: through the help sheet, the user guide, the write-up of problems tackled and feedback to users. Most candidates scored 2 or 3 marks, but some portfolios were not put together in a logical way, which meant that the highest mark could not be awarded.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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