



**General Certificate of Education (A-level) Applied  
June 2012**

**Applied Information and  
Communication Technology**

**IT11**

**(Specification  
8751/8753/8756/8757/8759)**

**Unit 11: Publishing**

***Report on the Examination***

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## **IT11 – Communications and Networks**

### **General Comments**

The majority of centres assessed the portfolios of their candidates accurately. Portfolios were seen across almost the full range of marks.

The unit concerns specifying and creating a network for a client. The portfolio need only contain evidence required for the criteria in the mark scheme – there is no requirement to include class investigations about different topologies or types of network.

Some centres did this as a 2-part portfolio – with the AO1 practical work using a centre-set scenario in a lab in the school or college. Others set up, usually in a lab, a version of their “real” network. Candidates who had real business clients tended to produce better quality evidence for AO2 and AO3.

### **AO1 – Practical work**

Rows 1 to 3 – To claim a client-server network has been set up, it is necessary to provide evidence of the installation of both the Client operating system and the Server operating system. Higher marks are only available for well-annotated work with explanations and justifications clearly given.

Row 5 – Standard ways of working specific to this unit are given on the marking grid. Discussion of these topics should be in relation to the designed or created network. Discussion of any other part of the candidate’s own work can not be awarded marks.

### **AO2 – Client aspects**

Having a real client makes a big difference to the marks gained in this section. It enables an interview to take place, and real user requirements to be identified. These provide the basis for the planning of a network to meet those requirements.

Candidates need to show their understanding of the organisational use of hardware and software. Multiple copies of software will most likely be required, a fact very often missed by candidates. Network-related software, such as operating systems (for client and server) and firewalls plus, if appropriate, internet access software is likely to be required.

There is no requirement to fully cost the designed network, or to worry about a budget, for the purposes of the portfolio. There is also no need to describe different types of network at great length.

### **AO3 – Network specification**

Row 1 – The physical plan of the office, factory or house should show major obstacles, walls, furniture etc. and where the various nodes will go. Alongside this, all connections need to be shown. To get 2 marks, technical details need adding, such as types of connector, MAC and IP addresses, Workstation names and so on. These details are best shown in an accompanying table so that the diagram does not become too cluttered. For the 3<sup>rd</sup> mark, a narrative is required to justify the layout.

Rows 2 to 4 – Lists of hardware and software, with ‘cut and pasted’ specifications only merit a single mark. Descriptions, decisions in relation to client requirements and justifications are required to get more. Hardware under investigation should only be that required for the network - individual elements of a PC are not necessary, although a server machine may be necessary.

Row 5 – Many candidates scored well on the configuration row, as the evidence for AO1 often showed operating system, hardware and application software configurations.

Row 6 – Many candidates only used the Internet for their research. If books or other sources were used, it was rare to see any explanation as to why for the highest mark on the row.

Row 7 – The implementation schedule should show all the steps needed to physically put the network together and test that it works.

### **A04 – Evaluation**

Rows 1 to 3 – Evidence for these rows generally came from the time plan with some candidates adding a diary. The time plan should not be based on lesson times only and it is completely unnecessary to add tasks that are not related to producing the solution. Some tasks were added retrospectively, which does not fit the concept of “planning”. The self-evaluation of performance was generally quite weak, with candidates being unable to critically review how they had approached the problem and solution.

Rows 4 and 5 – Evaluation criteria were generally not very well written. These should be based on the list of client requirements and phrased as questions. The test plan should be written in a detailed way and should allow the candidate to answer those questions posed. Very few candidates produced evaluation criteria, correctly categorised, and a test plan that followed those criteria. On the whole only simple testing was carried out, although one or two portfolios were of a high standard in this area.

Row 6 – This is different from Row 1 in that it should objectively review the network solution as created (or specified). Again, only in a few cases did candidates “critically” review their solution, using test evidence or witness statements from the client, to gain 3 or 4 marks.

Row 7 – Because this is a technical unit, many candidates were able to gain 2 or more marks for use of specialist vocabulary, although this had to come from their own descriptions rather than from the ‘cut and pasted’ information from other sources. Clear organisation of the portfolio, with a contents page, logical sections, using headers, footers and section headings, pages properly collated, merits 3 marks or more.

### **Mark Ranges and Award of Grades**

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