



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

**Applied Information and
Communication Technology**

IT15

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

Unit 15: Supporting ICT Users

Report on the Examination

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IT15 – Supporting ICT Users

General Comments

Most portfolios sampled had been assessed accurately, although where a centre had assessed too generously it often appeared to be because the candidates had not been given the opportunity to run a real user support service over a period of time. This resulted in the candidates not being able to gather enough relevant evidence for their portfolios. Running the service, reflecting on it, carrying out an evaluation and improvement of the service is the only way to access the higher marks on most of the rows of the marking grid for this unit.

The 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 common software or hardware problem, for instance “How to create pivot tables in MS Excel”.

Unfortunately, many candidates did not complete the portfolio in the logical way – some failed to do any real practical work at all, or worked in teams where it was impossible to verify if the candidates had actually solved any problems. It is acceptable for the teacher to simulate requests that cover some of the gaps in actual problems reported to the support service, although they should make sure that these are not identical for all candidates.

AO1 – Providing the User Support Service - Practical work

Row 1 – Some candidates had a good range of problems that covered the required types, gaining 1 or 2 marks quite easily. Some problems were complex, although the majority were trivial, as were the solutions offered; this is not providing a good service and does not show the competence of the support person, hence the requirement for some complex problems. A complex problem is defined as one where the first step taken does not fix the problem, but a series of simple steps may do so.

Row 2 – This row was often leniently assessed - both installation/un-installation **and** software setting must be done to get the 1st mark.

The quality of the write-up of the solution to the problem determined the mark awarded on Row 3, and the way in which it was recorded determined the mark for Row 4. Few candidates scored high marks on both rows

Some help sheets were unnecessarily covered multiple problems. These were likely to have wasted candidates' time. A simple help sheet on a single topic is all that is required – many gained both available marks with a 2-sided sheet.

To gain both marks for standard ways of working, candidates should have recorded details of the steps they took to work safely with computer equipment when providing the user support service – many failed to do this. In addition, centres should advise candidates to get a witness statement that confirms that they have worked safely.

AO2 – User aspects

Rows 1 and 2 are separate items. Users (and client) should be properly identified. Only those who are likely to use the support service are users – they can 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 provided either 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. Better descriptions scored 2 marks.

Row 3 – Only a few candidates said how the proposed service would improve the provision currently in place, allowing them to get full marks.

AO3 – Planning & Designing a User support service

To score high marks on this section, there has to be extensive involvement of service users and self-reflection needs to take place. Every row has an element of improvement, carried out after evaluation. Refer to the comments about time planning below, in AO4, Row 2 for an idea of what is required in AO3.

Row 1 – Many candidates failed to write up any investigation of the current service, and so could not score on this row. This row overarches all other rows in AO3 – it is about the complete service.

Row 2 is 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 access the highest marks. Often, however, they had failed to allow for recording the solution to each problem on either their logging sheet or the recording system. Without this and despite evaluations and refinements, marks are severely restricted on both rows.

Row 4 – Many candidates produced a workable guide to the user support service, gaining up to the 4th mark. Very few justified the design in terms of the needs of the service users for the 5th mark. Where the support service is to be accessed via an on-line form, then it was 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 distributed to the potential users of the service. A short discussion of possible formats is required at the design stage for the first mark. Without this, the second mark cannot be awarded.

A04 – Evaluation

The list of tasks on the time plan should cover all steps taken to provide evidence for the portfolio, for instance for A03 Row 1, planning the service, the tasks might be:

1. Compose a questionnaire about 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 4 – Many candidates scored 1 or 2 marks on this row by asking for comments about their help sheet and user guide.

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

Row 6 – 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: the help sheet, the user guide, the write-up of problems and feedback to users. Most candidates scored 2 or 3 marks, but some portfolios were not put together in a logical way, which made them difficult to follow. This restricted the mark available.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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