



**General Certificate of Education (A-level)  
January 2012**

**ICT**

**INFO4**

**(Specification 2520)**

**Unit 4: Coursework: Practical Issues Involved  
in the Use of ICT in the Digital World**

***Report on the Examination***

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## **General Comments**

This was the fifth session for the submission of students for INFO4 and as usual in January the numbers were low. On the whole, reports were well presented and covered all sections. The administration in most schools and colleges was good and the majority had used the marking grid to provide helpful comments which were cross-referenced with page numbers to evidence in the student's work. This is much appreciated, thank you. However a small number of schools and colleges used marking grids from previous series. Each year the marking grid is reviewed and revised to provide help to teachers in marking student work. All changes are side barred. It is essential that all schools and colleges use the most up to date version of the grid available on the e-AQA website.

### **1. Background and Investigation**

Most students provided a good background to the organisation, including type, purpose, size, scale and contact; however in some cases the description of the current system was quite vague. This description needs to be clear and for 3 marks should include consideration of the environment in which the current system operates. Environment in this context means other systems or procedures which may be internal or external to the organisation but have an influence or effect on the current system.

Students often identified their client and potential users but sometimes failed to clearly describe their role within the organisation. The justification for the required solution was generally tackled well and the better students justified the proposed solution leading to identification of client requirements.

Most students used some investigation techniques, but the student needs to demonstrate that they have used the findings from the investigation technique in order to be determined as having been used effectively. Interview questions and questionnaires were common, but not always used effectively and the justification was sometimes simplistic and could have come from a textbook, without any consideration for the context of the problem being investigated. Better students determined a clear set of client requirements, understanding the need to get this right early on in the project. It is significant that students that struggled with defining these requirements struggled later on to analyse the solution and eventually to test it.

### **2. Analysis and Deliverables**

The better students understood what was meant by scope and identified the areas that the solution would cover and also identified the areas it would not cover, thus demonstrating they understood the necessity of defining the scope of a project at this stage. What is more relevant is that the student recognises the importance of defining what will and what will not be included in the new system, and the constraints that limit the possible solution.

Most students attempted to define the deliverables that they would need to produce in order to satisfy client requirements. It should be noted what students need to include in the deliverables documentation such as user or technical guides. By doing this it can help show that the student understands that deliverables are more than a list of parts of the final solution; the solution should contain all that a client needs in order to effectively use the system once implemented.

Students need to demonstrate that they understand the need to check and validate processes with their client.

When showing a need to consider user skills in designing a solution, simply stating that the solution must be “easy to use” or user-friendly is not enough. All solutions should do this, regardless of the user skills. What is required here is for students to put the design in the context of the solution and the identified user skills for this organisation.

Evaluation criteria need to be identified which can assess the effectiveness of the solution, and the better students related these to the client requirements. Far too often, however, students simply copied or re-worded the client requirements without showing the understanding of the need to assess effectiveness.

### **3. Design and Planning for Implementation.**

Alternative design solutions are not textbook reviews of software features, put into the context of the solution. Students need to show they have considered alternative ways of designing the solution to meet client requirements. Key designs for a database for example would be table schema, or for a website a site structure or navigation structure. Good students looked at alternatives and clearly related them back to client requirements.

The best students demonstrated a clear understanding of the iterative nature of design work, the need to check, amend and gain approval for their designs from their client.

The plans produced by students often included deadlines and durations, but sometimes concentrated on the deliverables of the project report, rather than the overall solution, thus missing tasks such as installing or introducing the system to the organisation.

Test strategies must be relevant to the implemented system; a generic description of the different types of testing may reinforce student knowledge of the subject but unless the student relates it specifically to their project, they do not gain credit.

Test plans were on the whole comprehensive, although it should be noted that evidence of functional or unit testing is not required in the next section, therefore these types of testing could easily be summarised in the plan.

### **4. Testing and Documentation of the Solution**

Testing needs to show evidence that complete processes have been tested and this includes what triggers the process, the input, and the clear evidence of the result of the processing, the output. Also the solution as a whole needs to be tested: this may include procedures and documentation identified earlier, for instance in the analysis and deliverables section. Schools and colleges are reminded that evidence of functional or unit testing is not required. Most students provided evidence of testing by their client or user.

The documentation delivered to the client by the student was generally of a high standard, but in order to gain good marks it must be in a type/form that is appropriate to the solution, and meets client needs. The type and format of documentation must be identified earlier in the background or analysis sections, otherwise it could not be considered appropriate as the student has not identified it as needed.

The better students demonstrated that the documentation was appropriate by testing it with the client or user, and reflecting on that testing.

## **5. Evaluation of the Implemented Solution**

Most students attempted this section but often students restated evaluation criteria and client requirements and added a simple statement on whether the solution met these requirements or not.

## **6. The Project Report**

The project reports produced by students were often of a high standard. This section is important to evaluate the students understanding not only of providing an effective solution for a client but also the need to provide concise, relevant and clear evidence for the reader.

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