

GCSE 2003
June Series



Report on the Examination

Applied Information and Communication Technology (Double Award)

- Unit 1 ICT Tools and Applications
- Unit 2 ICT in Organisations
- Unit 3 ICT and Society

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Applied Information and Communication Technology (Double Award)

Unit 1

Some candidates presented their portfolios in a well-organised manner where it was clear which task was being addressed. These candidates should be congratulated. Unfortunately, some candidates presented a set of unorganised pages that was difficult to assess.

Report Reviewing Documents

It is essential that candidates include the documents they are reviewing for this task.

Many candidates reviewed documents and were able to describe them. Some candidates failed to describe the purpose of the documents and so did not gain full credit. A description including the content, layout and purpose is required.

Candidates were required to review documents that were produced using several software applications. Many candidates failed to mention the software applications used and so did not gain full credit. Many candidates did not connect the documents with the features of the software applications. Some candidates discussed formatting only and not the full range of features.

Many candidates provided a superficial evaluation only and did not comment on the suitability of purpose.

A few candidates discussed improvements, some of the improvements offered were superficial and not appropriate for the documents.

Production of Documents

Candidates must produce sufficient documents to show that they have used ICT tools to search for, select and organise information. Some candidates did this through the production of annotated drafts, while others provided drafts and produced a diary of how the documents were produced. Some candidates provided a diary but did not provide evidence of the ICT tools. For example, some candidates produced a table which they said was a spreadsheet but there was no evidence of spreadsheet tools (eg formulae) or the use of a spreadsheet.

Where candidates had produced simple documents then their use of ICT tools was weak, which affected this task and the Description and Evaluation of Documents.

Many candidates integrated two software applications to produce documents very successfully, and a number produced complex documents and the associated evidence of the use of appropriate tools. Many candidates did not produce documents that were fit for purpose. There were several areas which caused problems. Often the layout or the style of writing were not appropriate. Sometimes some essential items of information were missing, for example the date and subject on a memo.

Some candidates duplicated their work unnecessarily by producing a number of similar documents using the same application. It would have been better to produce good quality documents using a variety of applications.

Wizards may be used as a starting point but their results should be amended to produce the final documents which use a full range of software features. This was often not the case.

Candidates are expected to design their own documents including the graphic and text content. Centres must not supply candidates with text for their documents.

Description and Evaluation of Documents

Many candidates gave a general description of their documents when a description of the software features used is required. Candidates must also consider how the features are used to meet the purposes of the documents. Many candidates considered formatting only and ignored other features of software.

Candidates should have draft documents from the previous task to show their use of ICT tools. These should be annotated here to show the development of their documents. Some candidates presented very simple developments, for example use of a spell checker. While these are useful, it is anticipated that further developments will have taken place. Some candidates provided many hand-drawn designs. While these are useful in the design stage, it is the electronic drafts which gain credit.

Many candidates produced sections entitled Evaluation and Comparison with Documents. However these were often descriptive, containing little evaluative comment.

Report or presentation using a range of sensing and image manipulation software

It is not necessary to produce both a report and a presentation, either is sufficient. All types of software mentioned in the grid must be included. These are CAD/CAM, sensing and control, and image manipulation. Candidates who do not attempt all of these are disadvantaged.

Many candidates produced very simplistic reports often with just headings on the topic. Even the lowest band of marks requires a description. It also requires descriptions of features of the software, which some candidates found difficult to produce.

Standard Ways of Working

Many candidates produced good folder and file structures.

Very few candidates gave sources of information and fewer still verified them successfully. It is not sufficient for candidates to give vague items such as ‘the Internet’, or ‘a textbook’ or ‘a teacher’ as a source. More precise detail is required. For example, a book must have the title, author, publisher and date of publication listed. A source which has been fully described should then be verified with another source which has been fully described.

It is not sufficient to use the same source for all the verification.

Unit 2

There were no entries for this unit in this series.

Unit 3

This was the first opportunity for centres to enter candidates for the externally assessed unit. Examiners were somewhat disappointed by the overall quality of candidates' work, and it was felt that a number of centres had entered candidates who had not been properly prepared for the examination, and who did not have the necessary depth of knowledge and understanding to achieve higher grades. This was apparent from the quality of candidates' responses to the three sections of the assessment. Consequently the number of candidates who were awarded marks above that required for grade C was very limited indeed.

It is often the case that candidates do not perform well in the first sitting of an examination, as they and their teachers gain confidence with the requirements of a new specification. There have been a number of teachers' standardisation meetings held over the past two years, and a further series is planned for the Autumn term of 2003. Centres are very strongly encouraged to send a representative to these meetings, and to cascade information received to colleagues back in the centre. Portfolio advisers and members of the senior examining team are available to lead training sessions in centres for groups of staff. Details of the arrangements and costs of such sessions are available from the AQA Subject Office in Manchester.

Portfolio Presentation

The quality of presentation of candidates' portfolios was mixed, and tended to be centre-related. Portfolios from a number of centres were well presented, with candidates' evidence presented in a logical sequence, with pages numbered consecutively and the three tasks clearly divided. This made the marking process easier for the examiner. A disappointingly large number of centres, however, presented portfolios which were poorly organised and where evidence was very difficult to locate. A number of candidates were allowed, despite earlier requests to the contrary, to use plastic wallets. Centres are reminded that these should not be used to enclose candidates' work.

Task One: Report

This task was worth 30% of the total marks, and required candidates to produce a report on the technologies available to access and exchange information, and carry out transactions in the Entertainment and Leisure area of society.

The emphasis of this report was required to be on that specific area, and examiners were looking for evidence that candidates had studied that area in depth and were able to relate their answers to it. Unfortunately, a large number of candidates produced generic reports that did not focus sufficiently on the identified area, and so were unable to achieve more than the minimum number of marks.

It is expected that candidates have been taught about all the areas of society identified in the specification. The assessment, however, focuses on one of the areas, and candidates are required to carry out detailed research into that particular area, and use their research to produce a detailed report. Many of the portfolios produced by candidates, however, did not show evidence of that detailed research, and it appeared that many candidates relied instead on general knowledge to produce their report. Comments such as “the main advantage of [this brand of] mobile phone is that you can buy coloured covers for it” were disturbingly common.

Centres are asked to point out strongly to candidates the need for detailed research, and to remind them that even a ‘basic description’ as required in the first mark range, needs some evidence of a depth of knowledge of the subject.

Very few candidates in this sitting achieved more than half marks in this task, with most scoring less than 10. No candidates included acceptable evaluated and validated lists of sources, although a small number did attempt a basic list.

Task Two: Presentation

This task was worth around half of the total marks for the examination, and required candidates to focus on Business and Organisations. Again, a significant number of candidates lost marks through not concentrating their efforts on the prescribed area, but producing generic presentations, which by their nature lacked sufficient depth to achieve more than minimal marks.

A large proportion of candidates did not describe, or in many cases even identify, the groups and/or individuals affected, thereby losing the low-level marks.

Many candidates’ presentations again demonstrated a lack of thorough research or more than a superficial knowledge of the subject, and so marks were disappointingly low. As has been commented about the reports, there is an expectation that candidates are taught the content detailed in the specification and support this by specific research of their own, but many relied solely on general knowledge or unsubstantiated conjecture.

Most candidates produced a technically competent presentation, with evidence of the inclusion of animations, transitions, etc. There were some fine examples of presentations that were of good quality visually, although the pleasing aesthetics often appeared to be a mask for lack of detailed knowledge of the topic.

Virtually no candidates offered informed suggestions as to how ICT developments will affect the chosen groups in the future, although a small number did suggest some ‘fantasy’ scenarios but were unable to support their theories.

Very few candidates indeed evaluated their work or attempted to validate their sources of information, and so were unable to achieve the top range of marks.

Task Three: Newsletter or Brochure

This task, worth up to 18% of the total marks for the unit, was probably the best attempted of the three. Most candidates produced visually pleasing documents, with newsletters being the more popular option of candidates. These publications were often heavily reliant on the use of software ‘wizards’ or templates, and the structure of these templates in a number of cases restricted the amount of information that could be included on the document, thereby reducing candidates’ opportunities to achieve marks. Whilst the use of such templates is acceptable for this task, candidates should ensure that those chosen are appropriate for the purpose to which they are being put.

The prime requirement of this task was for candidates to describe the purposes of the various pieces of legislation, and to consider the implications for users. Many candidates lost marks by including lengthy technical details of the various laws. This detail was not necessary, and had often been copied verbatim from a website. Candidates handing in such plagiarism received no marks for this task, as the work was clearly not their own. Centres are asked to reinforce with their candidates that producing work in this way is unacceptable, and in itself goes against some of the legislation about which they are likely to be writing.

Very few candidates, again, included details of the sources of their information, and virtually none provided evidence of validation of their sources.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Unit	Maximum Mark (Raw)	Maximum Mark (Scaled)	Mean Mark (Scaled)	Standard Deviation (Scaled)
Unit 1 - ICT Tools and Applications 3850/1	100	100	42.4	22.5
Unit 2 - ICT in Organisations 3850/2	There were no entries for this unit in this series			
Unit 3 - ICT and Society 3850/3	100	100	20.1	11.7

For units which contain only one component, scaled marks are the same as raw marks.

Unit 1 (1029 candidates)

	Max. mark	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Scaled Boundary Mark	100	94	82	70	59	49	39	29	19
Uniform Boundary Mark	100	90	80	70	60	50	40	30	20

Unit 2 (0 candidates)

	Max. mark	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Scaled Boundary Mark	100	There were no entries for this unit in this series							
Uniform Boundary Mark	100								

Unit 3 (800 candidates)

	Max. mark	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Scaled Boundary Mark	100	92	80	68	56	44	33	22	11
Uniform Boundary Mark	100	90	80	70	60	50	40	30	20

Definitions

Boundary Mark: the minimum (scaled) mark required by a candidate to qualify for a given grade.

Mean Mark: is the sum of all candidates' marks divided by the number of candidates. In order to compare mean marks for different components, the mean mark (scaled) should be expressed as a percentage of the maximum mark (scaled).

Standard Deviation: a measure of the spread of candidates' marks. In most components, approximately two-thirds of all candidates lie in a range of plus or minus one standard deviation from the mean, and approximately 95% of all candidates lie in range of plus or minus two standard deviations from the mean. In order to compare the standard deviations for different components, the standard deviation (scaled) should be expressed as a percentage of the maximum mark (scaled).

Uniform Mark: a score on a standard scale which indicates a candidate's performance. The lowest uniform mark for grade A* is always 90% of the maximum uniform mark for the unit, similarly grade A is 80%, grade B is 70%, grade C is 60%, grade D is 50%, grade E is 40%, grade F is 30% and grade G is 20%. A candidate's total scaled mark for each unit is converted to a uniform mark and, when subject grades are awarded in 2004, the uniform marks for the units will be added in order to determine the candidate's overall grade.