

INITIAL STEPS LEVEL

Paper 8984/4269-4274

Cambridge ICT Starters

General comments

Most Centres who enter candidates for Cambridge ICT Starters regularly are now comfortable with the requirements of the syllabus and prepare candidates well. It has been pleasing also to see a good number of new Centres making submissions for certification for the first time. This year has seen an increase in the number of entries using the Cambridge designed assessment tests, which has also led to fewer mark changes by the Moderator, and this allows Centres to focus more on the accurate marking of candidates' work. However, some Centres do continue to use their own assessments very successfully, although these should always be checked against the CIE assessments to ensure they allow candidates to demonstrate all the required evidence.

There are some differences between some Centres who spend time ensuring that their submissions are well prepared for moderation and others who present a confusing picture of how their candidates have been assessed and how the work has been marked. This leads to additional requests for information/further samples and can delay results. In particular, newer Centres should ensure that they have included all the required evidence and, if they are unsure about anything they might need to include, they should ask via the ICT Starters discussion group – cie-starter-ca@lists.ucles.org.uk

A minority of Centres still do not understand that candidates have to achieve **all** Pass learning objectives to gain a Pass and **all** Merit learning objectives to gain a Merit. Indeed, many queries received by Cambridge about assessment and moderation are addressed in the syllabus. Centres are advised to consult this document carefully.

Centres on the whole continue to enter candidates for the Stage 1 certificate first before the full certificate, with most entries now being made in two separate stages. Initial Steps and Next Steps Stage 1 continue to be the most popular modules, although there has been an increase in entries for On Track this year.

Preparing candidate work for submission to CIE

Centres need to ensure that it is obvious to the Moderator why particular marks have been awarded.

- The **assessment tests and teacher's 'answer copy' should always be included** with the candidates' work.
- It is **often helpful to include a note of explanation** with candidate submissions to ease the moderation process and ensure that the Moderator does not miss elements of the candidate's work. This is also an extremely useful way to explain why a Pass or Merit has been awarded if it is not immediately obvious.

Please ensure all documents are clearly labelled. In addition, care should be taken to ensure that the marks recorded on the candidate entry form are the same as those on the work itself. Finally, the entry form should indicate which candidates' samples have been included with the submission. If Centres are entering work for different certificates, e.g. some candidates for Stage 1 and some for the full certificate, it is always advisable to use separate entry forms, so that there is no confusion.

Electronic submission of work

More Centres are now submitting work electronically on CD-ROM (floppy disk is not permitted) but **all electronic files must be in pdf or jpeg format**. This means that word processed documents, spreadsheets etc. need to be scanned electronically before submission. Other files will not be opened and cannot be considered for moderation (with the exception of a generic video file for the Video for a Purpose module).

This avoids any changes in formatting etc. caused by different versions of software and, indeed, the Moderator may not always have access to particular software Centres have used in the assessment tests.

Particular care should be taken to ensure that files are clearly labelled if submitting work electronically. **There should be a separate folder for each candidate in the sample and additional folders within each candidate folder for each module.** Additional thought should be given to the filenames that candidates are asked to give to saved documents in their assessment tests.

Some Centres have submitted work partly in electronic form and partly in hard copy. This can sometimes make it hard to locate the evidence for particular candidates and Centres are advised to send work **either in hard copy or electronically, but not a mixture of both.**

Designing assessment tests

If Centres wish to design their own assessment tests or to adapt CIE assessment papers, we ask that their proposed tests are submitted to CIE for approval before being used for candidate assessment (please contact international@cie.org.uk). We would not need to see papers that have already been submitted within a previous examination entry.

Centres should continue to ensure that assessment tests give candidates the opportunity to produce evidence of their having achieved all Learning Objectives as stated in the syllabus. In some cases, teacher evidence is allowed. A note to this effect should accompany the work, initialled by the teacher. Where possible, tests should be authentic, giving candidates a 'real' experience of using ICT for a specific purpose.

For Centre-designed assessment tests, please show which learning objective each question is intended to assess.

Care must be taken not to prompt candidates too much. They should be asked to carry out a task, broken down into individual steps, but not told what icons to click or what to select from the toolbar menus. A small minority of Centres try to design assessments with a numerical marking system. This is not appropriate when the final marks awarded to candidates will be Pass or Merit.

However, it is noticeable that candidates perform better and there are fewer marking changes when Centres have used the CIE produced assessment tests. There are now 4 sets available. Using these ensures that candidates will be assessed in all learning objectives.

It is permissible to make changes to the CIE papers to comply with local settings, lesson content etc., but great care must be taken to ensure they still test all the learning objectives.

Module specific advice

Starting with Text

It is not good practice to get candidates to enter a lot of text with errors. Text which requires corrections can be given to them, though they should also be entering some text themselves. Also, the text must be completely error free to award Merit.

Starting Images

Candidates should be able to amend their original picture by selecting a particular object and either deleting it entirely (restoring the background) or copying and pasting it elsewhere in the picture.

Starting Graphs

Candidates should be given some data to classify, rather than just amending an existing spreadsheet. In addition to answering questions about the graphs, candidates should be asked to make their own observations, unprompted by a particular question.

Starting Control

Candidates should supply the instructions given and the path of the turtle.

Starting Searches

Candidates need to be required to make explicit the keywords they use for searching.