Examiners' Report/
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2016

Pearson Edexcel International GCSE
In ICT (4IT0)
Paper 02 Practical Paper

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This report is split into two sections: General Comments and Specific Comments. In the Specific Comments, details about the individual activities and areas for improvement will be discussed.

GENERAL COMMENTS

This was the sixth series of Pearson's International GCSE ICT. There were just over 5000 students sitting this practical paper. Marks ranged from 0 to 97 with the mean mark of 54.3. The large majority of students submitted work for all tasks.

Students continue to lose marks because of failure to pay attention to detail. For example:

15 marks were available for entering correct formulae into a spreadsheet. Many students failed to gain these marks because they did not submit a formula view of the spreadsheet. Often other printouts suggested that they may have done correct calculations. A small number of students lost marks because they failed to submit a printout of the data view when required. In these cases it was not possible to award some of the formatting marks. Other marks were lost due to inaccuracies where students were asked to enter data given on the question paper. In this paper there were a number of marks for accurate entry of data – particularly in the spreadsheet and database tasks.

Where screen shot evidence was required, many students lost marks because their screen shot was cropped or resized so that the vital information was not visible or not readable.

Fewer students failed to enter their student details on their work. However it should be noted that the nature of this examination requires students to enter their details before printing to avoid suspicions of collusion. The instructions appear quite clearly in the question paper and in the specification and in the Instructions for the Conduct of the Examination (ICE) document.

Examiners were pleased to note that there was little evidence that students were able to access the internet during the examination. Internet usage during this examination is a breach of the regulations and may result in students being disqualified.

Examiners noted that most students were able to complete all the tasks required, though a small number of students did not complete all activities. It is suggested that students are advised that they should allocate their time so that they spend approximately one and a half minutes per mark. As in previous series, guidance was provided about the length of time students should spend on each activity. This practice will be continued in future series.

Data files

Few issues with the data files were reported to Pearson.

These files are produced in different formats so that centre staff can make sure that the files open using the software available during the examination. It should also be noted that only one version of the files should be available for students. There was some evidence that in some centres students had access to all the different versions of the data files.

Centre staff are reminded that the data files must remain confidential until after the end of the examination window printed on the front cover of the paper. It is a breach of the regulations for staff to discuss the contents of the data files with students. They are made available before the examination in order that a member of staff can check that the files work with the hardware and software available during the examination. After they have been checked, the files should be copied into the students' examination folders. A backup copy in a sub-folder is useful to enable students to re-start tasks should they wish to do so.

Centre staff should note that the data files for the 2017 examination will be available by secure download from the Pearson website approximately 2 weeks before the examination window.

Labelling and printing

The formatting of the paper is such that when students are given instructions, the separate tasks are identified within the question paper with title case for the task name (e.g. Task PS1(b)). When instructions are given to save or resave documents then upper case is used (e.g. Save the spreadsheet as TASK SS2). Occasionally, as in Task AG1(a), students are not required to print out their work until later in the activity. This was less of an issue during this series as in most cases there was a printout for each task or sub-task.

Centre staff should remind students that it is a requirement of this examination that typed student details are expected on all printouts. Experience has shown that where students have been encouraged to label all their documents before printing in the normal classroom environment, then this is rarely an issue during the stresses of examination work.

Some examiners noted that the quality of printout varied considerably. Centres should try to ensure that the printer is capable of producing satisfactory output during the examination window. The poor quality of some printout is often to the disadvantage of the student when the examiner cannot read or distinguish what the student has produced. Centre staff should note that there is no extra credit for printing in colour. Where students are asked to follow a colour scheme, such as in the web authoring task in this examination, examiners use their judgement to decide whether the colour scheme has been used and will give the benefit of doubt to students where printouts are in monochrome.

Examiners reported that students at several centres did not collate their work in the correct order. It was also noted that students often did not attach their scripts to the cover sheet in the correct manner. This was often repeated by all students at a centre which suggests that the students had been incorrectly instructed by Centre staff. The cover sheet, when opened, has a punched hole in the top left corner. Students should punch a hole in the top left corner of each printout then attach the printouts to the cover sheet so that when the cover sheet is opened by the examiner the student's work is face up on the left with the marking grid on the right. Students at some centres make it very difficult for the examiner to gain access to the work by the way they submit their work. It is not helpful if the front and back cover are included in the tag. Also it would be helpful to examiners if thin cotton were not used as the pages tied in this manner tend to tear easily.

Examiners also noted that the work from some centres was not sorted into the same order as the attendance lists.

Resources

There are now two sets of Sample Assessment Materials available on the Pearson website. Copies of the 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015 and 2016 question papers, data files and mark schemes and examiners reports are also available for use in preparing future students.

In addition, centre staff are reminded that Pearson offers the "Ask the Expert" facility on its website where Senior Examiners can answer questions from staff about the specification and examinations.

SPECIFIC COMMENTS

The examination consisted of 5 activities based on the theme of Terrier Holiday Rentals who rent out cottages in Scotland.

ACTIVITY 1 – USING ART/IMAGING AND GRAPHICS SOFTWARE

In Activity 1, students were asked to comment on a logo produced by the owner of the company, create a new logo using an image from the data files and adding text identified in the question paper. They were then asked to edit an image for use on a presentation.

Whilst most students were able to identify the issue about the text being unclear, fewer students identified that a photograph was unsuitable for use in a logo. In creating a new logo most were able to choose a suitable image from the data files. Most also added the correct text. A large number of students managed to achieve an appropriate balance between the size of the text and the image. Whilst many students were able to identify that the image in a logo needs to be simple, few commented on the need for a vector graphic rather than a bitmap image.

Cropping of the given image in part (b) was reasonably well done but several students failed to crop close enough. Most students were then able to add the required text but not all maintained a suitable size of text to fill the box.

Key areas for improvement:

accuracy in copying text from the question paper

understanding the requirements of an image used in a logo

understanding the differences between a bitmap and vector graphic image

achieving an appropriate balance in producing a logo which combines text

and image

being able to amend images effectively

being able to crop images effectively

ACTIVITY 2 – USING DATABASE SOFTWARE

Students were provided with a database file with three tables of data about the cottages, contacts and the rentals.

Students

In Task DB1, students were asked to enter a new record and sort the data in the CONTACT table. Examiners noted again that many students lost marks because they did not check the data that they entered was correct and consistently formatted with data already present in the table. Some also lost marks because they did not carry out a correct sort on the data. Truncation of data was an issue for some students – particularly those who took screen shots of the data rather than copying the table into a word-processing document.

In DB2, students were asked to carry out two searches of the data in the database. Most students achieved good marks on this task. Those that did not do so, lost marks for incorrect search criteria or incorrect fields displayed.

In Task DB3(a), students were asked to identify the primary key in one of the relationships present in the data file. Many students were able to correctly do this but some did not gain credit because they did not identify the correct table.

For Task DB3(b) students were asked to create a query to find records of cottages rented in July, sorting the results in ascending order of RENTALDATE within ascending order of COTTAGENAME. A wide variety of responses were acceptable for identifying the correct records. Where unsuccessful attempts were made, it was often due to students to students not checking the output of the query design. This meant that the students ended up with records for dates in June and August as well as or instead of those required.

In Task DB4 students were required to produce a database report based on the query produced in Task DB3. The better students managed to produce good reports but often lost marks due to inconsistencies in the customisation of column headings and also failure to follow instructions to produce a landscape report layout.

Key areas for improvement:

entering data accurately using a format consistent with other records

primary and secondary sorting in ascending and descending order

simple searches

searches using multiple criteria

displaying all / selected fields in output in requested order

identifying appropriate primary key fields

creating customised reports from database queries.

ACTIVITY 3 – USING PRESENTATION SOFTWARE

Students were asked to use resources that were provided to create a six slide presentation to a given design. Examiners reported that they saw many excellent examples of presentations which were fit for purpose. Where students did lose marks it was often in not editing the text to make it more suitable for use in a presentation and / or not having consistency in the layouts.

Students were asked to identify a formatting feature they had used to make the presentation fit for purpose. Many students did not gain credit because they failed to identify a formatting feature (this did not include inserting elements such as text and images).

As the final part of the task, students were asked to include hyperlinks on the title slide to the other slides in the presentation and then display the dialog boxes that were used for the process.

Key areas for improvement:

integrating text and images for a presentation

using appropriate fonts for a presentation

applying consistently a design layout provided

identifying and explaining the purpose of formatting techniques

displaying the dialog boxes for presentation techniques

ACTIVITY 4 – USING SPREADSHEET SOFTWARE

In Activity 2, students were provided with a spreadsheet containing two worksheets which held data of cottage details and rentals made in 2015. As usual they were asked to enter data, sort, enter formulae, format a worksheet and produce a graph to analyse the data.

In Task SS1, they were asked to enter values for another cottage then sort the table of data and format the table. This was a relatively simple task which the majority of students managed successfully. However some students lost marks because they did not take care when entering the data and did not maintain the integrity of the data and sorted only the single column rather than doing the primary and secondary sort. In formatting some lost marks because they did not follow the instruction to use a currency symbol with no decimal places.

In Task SS2, students were required to produce a chart of the daily rates for cottage containing less than three bedrooms. Whilst most students realised that a bar chart was required, many did not use the correct data and / or produce a chart title that was suitable. Students should be encouraged to use the text of the question paper to guide them in their choice of title. Students should also be aware of the need for a consistent approach to capitalising words in chart titles and axis labels.

In Task SS3 students were asked enter relatively simple formulae to multiply two cells, replicate the formula and total the column. They were then asked to enter a formula to calculate the percentage use of the cottages by dividing the number of days used by the contents of cell D3. Whilst many managed to enter a suitable formula using an absolute cell reference, quite a number failed to realise the need to multiply by 100 to produce a percentage. A small number of students lost several marks on this task because they did not print out a formula view of the spreadsheet.

For Task SS4, students were asked to enter formulae to calculate the effect giving a discount where properties were used less than 40% of the year. Many students struggled with the IF statements required for these calculations.

Key areas for improvement:

accuracy in copying data into a spreadsheet

sorting a table of data in a spreadsheet whilst ensuring data integrity

primary and secondary sorting of spreadsheet data

formatting of text in a spreadsheet – for example:

merging cells

bold

italics

centring

left and right alignment

font size

formatting of numerical data including dates and currency

using appropriate borders and shading

entering simple formulae using the arithmetic operators (*, /, + and -)

entering formulae using simple functions (e.g. SUM)

entering formulae to calculate percentages

knowing when it is appropriate to use a function like SUM

use of absolute and relative cell addresses in formulae

replication of formulae

use of logical operators (>, <, and =; as well as combinations of these)

printing formula view or data view of a spreadsheet

printing selected columns in a spreadsheet

printing without truncation

producing suitable charts from data

producing appropriate titles and axis labels for a chart

understanding when a legend is required for a chart

understanding fitness for purpose and the features of a chart which is fit for

purpose

being able to explain spreadsheet terms

ACTIVITY 5 – USING WORD PROCESSING SOFTWARE

In Task WP1, students were asked to prepare a letterhead integrating the contact details and the logo they prepared in Task AG1b. They were then asked to use this letterhead to create a letter to one of the customers using

standard letter conventions. Whilst this was well attempted by many of the students, some letter formats were quite disappointing.

Many students did not include the date, a subject, a suitable salutation or a complimentary close.

Key areas for improvement:

careful copying of text from the question paper

understanding and use of layout conventions for common document types

such as letters

integrating a text document and images and tables

consistent formatting of text

using software tools to check spelling and grammar.

Grade Boundaries

Grade boundaries for this, and all other papers, can be found on the website on this link: