

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Paper 0418/01

Written

General comments

Considering that this was the first time that the old papers 1 and 2 had been combined for a November session, candidates performed very creditably. The wider scope of applications employed in questions on this paper meant that candidates were unable to gain high marks unless they had a good understanding of the content. Candidates seemed to have prepared themselves for past papers but when the questions were more specific they were unable to apply their knowledge to the question. This was particularly true of the Design question and the Expert systems.

In addition there were aspects of Systems Analysis which a number of candidates appeared to be unfamiliar with. They seemed to be able to name methods of Analysis without being able to describe them. This suggested that they could learn terms without necessarily understanding them. Some candidates did not perform as well as they might as they appeared to have knowledge of certain topics but appeared unable to apply this to the context of the question.

Expert systems, once again, proved to be a stumbling block for many candidates.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

The vast majority of candidates achieved full marks. A small minority of candidates thought that the image of a monitor represented that of a desk top computer.

Question 2

Most candidates achieved full marks, although a small number thought that a floppy disc can store many megabytes of data.

Question 3

Most candidates did well, though some thought that there had to be two true answers and two false answers.

Question 4

This question was well answered with most candidates gaining full marks.

Question 5

Most candidates got full marks.

Question 6

Most candidates scored at least 2 marks although a number gave MICR in (a) and Serial in (b).

Question 7a

Many candidates achieved full marks but typical incorrect answers were "circle" and "line" networks.

Question 7b

Most candidates answered this correctly.

Question 8

Many candidates gained full marks though the inclusion of left instead of right caused a number of candidates to drop marks.

Question 9a

This was well answered in that many candidates were able to name methods. Most candidates were limited to two marks out of four, however, as few were able to go on to describe in the methods in detail.

Question 9b

Most candidates had learned parts of design but many were unable to apply this knowledge to the requirements of the design of the database other than structure which the question had specifically told candidates not to give.

Question 10

Many of the descriptions given for this question were not sufficient for candidates to gain full marks. Several candidates confused real-time and on-line processing. Many candidates confused individuals using the Internet with on-line processing.

Question 11a

Candidates managed to gain at least one mark.

Question 11b

Candidates were often unable to answer this question correctly. Many gave an answer related to CD ROMs.

Question 12a

This question was well answered.

Question 12b

This question was well answered.

Question 12c

This question was not answered as well as expected, bearing in mind the need for this to be studied for the practical papers as well.

Question 12d

This was answered well.

Question 12e

This was not answered as well as expected. A number of candidates appeared to confuse modelling with measuring and gave answers related to accuracy and similar answers.

Question 13a

The majority of candidates scored 1 mark for a basic description but a number failed to give sufficient explanation.

Question 13b

This was well answered but some candidates still gave modem as their answer.

Question 13c

This was generally well answered.

Question 14a

This question was not well answered. Many candidates described how to create an expert system without apparently understanding how it is used.

Question 14b

Despite poor answers to 14a this part was well answered.

Question 15a

This was generally very well answered.

Question 15b

This was generally very well answered although some candidates appeared to think that a new candidate joining a School would cause a candidate's record to be altered.

Question 15c

This was generally very well answered.

Question 15d

Few candidates answered in sufficient depth to gain all three marks for the question. Many obtained one or two showing some knowledge in this area.

Question 16a

This was generally well answered

Question 16b

The majority of candidates gave correct answers.

Question 16c

This was fairly well answered although some candidates gave answers relating to customer advantages rather than advantages to the bank.

Question 16d

Not many candidates gained both marks for this question. The topic did not appear to be understood in any detail.

Question 16e

There were some good answers.

Question 17

Candidates were able to score 3 or 4 marks reasonably straightforwardly but did not appear to have studied libraries, to which this question was closely allied, in any detail, despite it being in the syllabus.

Question 18a

This was well answered.

Question 18b

This was not well answered despite the topic being one of the key parts of the syllabus.

Question 18c

This was better answered than 18b but answers lacked detail. Candidates who scored well tended to do so because of their knowledge of checks made rather than how the whole process is carried out.

Question 19a

Candidates tended to score very well on this question. Few candidates gained less than three marks.

Question 19b

This was not as well answered. Many candidates simply reproduced the question by saying that 'images, sound and text are inserted into the presentation.'

Question 20

Few candidates appeared to have sufficient depth of knowledge to gain high marks on this question. There were many lengthy answers with repeats of the same marking points reworded in several ways. Too many candidates misunderstood the question and wrote about all teaching taking place using the Internet, teachers being made redundant and schools closing. The question was about how having access to the Internet can affect teaching for candidates, teachers and schools.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Paper 0418/02
Written Paper 2

General comments

The performance of candidates in this examination was generally good, with a large number of candidates performing well on the paper. Many of these candidates scored high marks, although a full spread of marks was experienced, and the paper performed well.

The text files were written and checked in UK English. If candidates have machines with default windows settings to US English (or other similar settings) then some of the words would be identified as spelling errors. In these cases the spelling should not be corrected (although candidates have not been penalised if they did so).

There were a number of issues with capitalisation. Candidates must ensure that capitalisation matches that prescribed in the question paper.

Comments on specific questions

Communication

This section was well completed by the majority of candidates. The candidates generally provided good evidence of the required skills, but some problems were due to the candidates'/centres' choice of software. In these cases the name of the attached file was not visible. Candidates were instructed to attach the file they had downloaded from the website. This was the txt file. A small number of candidates incorrectly attached the csv file. Some candidates lost marks by mis-spelling the address or the subject line text.

Document Production

The general standard of work in this section was very good. The most common errors were in setting the page size and/or the margin settings. Errors concerning text alignment (the most common not setting fully justified text for the document), font size and line spacing (with single line spacing the most common error) were sometimes seen. On occasion candidates failed to apply fonts, styles or spacing consistently to all of the paragraphs. The page break, while usually correctly inserted, was occasionally set after the wrong text, or not inserted at all. Candidates could not then be credited with the removal of the page break later in this latter case.

Page numbers and the date in the footer needed to be aligned to the right or left margins. Candidates need to be aware of, be able to adjust and apply text to left, centre and right aligned tab stops in headers and footers. They should be able to adjust these to accommodate changes resulting from changed page orientation. The centring of text "by eye" can be observed in electronically submitted scripts. Frequently the date was adjusted towards the right margin, but not aligned to it.

Data Manipulation

It should be noted that the instruction requires the candidate to import the source file into the database package and not to link to the file externally. Candidates may be made aware of the differences between importing and linking files. This distinction becomes apparent and significant when files are submitted electronically for marking.

This section of the paper proved the most taxing for the candidates. There were errors found in all of the extracts which included the failure to show field labels in full, and also in the entry of the data. Failure to display a field in the first extract meant that data entry could not be checked, losing one mark for each record to be added. The majority of candidates correctly sorted the database.

Sometimes field labels and the related field data were mismatched, especially from those candidates using Microsoft Access by making adjustments to the report structure. Occasionally field column headings were imported into the database, and new field headings were sometimes applied. If the field names appeared in selections of data, then candidates lost marks on the search criteria. Leaving the default "field 1", etc. led to an error in displaying all data and labels.

The average weight was generally well done and placed correctly. If the selection was incorrect, follow through was allowed. Sometimes the calculated field was not placed below the weight column in the report. Frequently the records were not sorted into descending order of Make – this may be a result of a report overriding a query that had already been sorted and this event not being noticed by the candidate. If an ID field is applied, it should not appear in the selections where specified fields only are required. The field used in the selection (colour) was sometimes printed but was not specified for display, so incurred an error mark.

Integration

Margin settings again provided the greatest problems to candidates, with a significant number failing to correctly amend the page size and/or margin settings. Header text was usually moved to the left.

An appropriate image was usually found and inserted in the correct place in the document. Errors included an image that extended into the margin or was not placed below the heading. Also the image was not always resized sufficiently to meet the minimum expected.

The table was generally inserted in the right place although there were a number of accuracy errors in the text added to the table. 100% accuracy was expected for text entry, and several candidates failed to attain this. Occasionally the table was inserted in a different position e.g. at the end of the document.

Some candidates did not insert the database extract into the document, losing all the marks associated with this activity. Credit was given for skills demonstrated if a named printout of this extract was included independently of the document. When present the selection was usually correct, but sometimes either missed one of the makes, or presented the records in an unsorted order. Occasionally extra fields beyond those specified were displayed. Usually the record extract was positioned within the margins of the text.

There were a number of errors introduced in line spacing between paragraphs and a small number of candidates failed to insert page breaks to ensure that there were no split lists or tables. Several candidates failed to remove the page break inserted in the first printout and a significant number of candidates had errors in consistent line spacing or text alignment.

Administration

A report from a Supervisor is paraphrased here. "The logon to the network did not allow access to the network printer, so floppy disks were used. These proved unreliable and had to be checked. The network did not provide software for the database section of the paper. Hence the Supervisor copies are incomplete. As the Supervisor copies were undertaken while trying to supervise the candidates and solve their network problems, the work is not complete."

It is not surprising that the candidate work was also not complete. While not underestimating the problems the supervisor and candidates encountered on that day, the report serves to highlight a number of issues. One is the purpose of the supervisor worked copy. It is essential that this is worked before the examination on the system to be used by the candidates in order to establish that they will be able to undertake the examination with the minimum of technical difficulties and that all required software will be available to them to complete the examination. Network logon rights and access to printers must be established before the examination. Supervision of an examination cannot be carried out while undertaking another task.

The examination materials and support files are made available to the centre for the purposes of carrying out such checks as outlined above. However, these examination materials must be kept securely and support materials must not be made available to candidates before the examination, nor must any materials based on the support files be used for preparation for the examination.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Paper 0418/03

Practical Test

General comments

The majority of candidates completed all elements of the paper. There were vast differences in the range of results from centre to centre. A number of candidates lost marks by not carefully reading the question paper and carefully checking their answers, a significant number of data entry errors indicates that candidates are not really proof reading and checking their data entry.

Some candidates did not print their name, centre number and candidate number on every document submitted for assessment. Without clear printed evidence of the author of the work, examiners were unable to award any marks for these pages. It is not acceptable for candidates to hand annotate their printouts with their name as there is no real evidence that they are the originators of the work, as opposed to inadvertently collecting the work of another candidate from the printer, and annotating this with their name. Printing candidate names by hand on every sheet does not fulfil this requirement.

A small number of candidates failed to print out the html code for the website authoring, or the formulae for the data handling. In both cases it was impossible to award many marks to the candidates without the evidence of their structure and syntax. There were also a number of candidates who had used frames for the website authoring section. This was a valid solution for this paper, but a minority of these candidates did not print the html code for all of the frames used.

Comments on specific questions

Data Analysis

Question 1

Some candidates failed to set up the data model as specified in the question paper, there were a number of typographical errors that were not carefully checked by the candidates.

Question 3

Some candidates attempted to do this without using named cells **six** and **three**. A significant number of candidates experienced problems with the IF statement. The most frequent error was failing to use absolute referencing for the 'M' or 'C' if using cell numbering. The IF function did cause problems as some candidates failed to multiply by the correct cell name, therefore achieving an incorrect result.

Question 4

A significant number of candidates reversed this formula. This led to some negative values showing in the Value column.

Question 5

This question was generally well done.

Question 6

A number of candidates introduced errors in the COUNTIF formulae, some with the range of cells selected (counting the cells in column B was the most common wrong answer), some with the value (or cell reference) to compare with, and others with the syntax of the COUNTIF function.

Question 7

This question was generally done well, although a significant number of candidates had incorrect data entry which ensured that the spreadsheet did not accept the values in date format. The most significant display error was for the format to be misrepresented by the software as a result of a typing error and appear as e.g. 9 Jan for 1 Sept, etc.

Question 8

Several candidates did not format all the specified columns. Some formatted only two of the three columns. A small number of candidates set the cells to currency but with 0 decimal places.

Question 10

This was well done by the vast majority of candidates.

Question 11

This question presented problems for a number of candidates. A significant number of candidates did not demonstrate the ability to switch between the value setting and formulae setting within the spreadsheet. On some scripts candidates failed to resize the columns, resulting in the formulae being partially hidden. Almost all of the candidates managed to get the sheet onto a single page.

Question 12

There were a number of data entry errors, particularly related to the insertion of spaces and other punctuation in the date values. There were a significant number of spelling errors. The numeric data entry was usually correct.

Question 14

This question was generally well done. A number of candidates could not filter the data from the given criterion. Some candidates attempted to delete the rows rather than searching/filtering for the correct data.

Question 15

A more significant number of candidates could not filter the data using the two given criteria. Again, some candidates attempted to delete the rows rather than searching/filtering for the correct data.

Website Authoring

Question 17

A number of candidates did not create an external style sheet. There were a number of small web pages saved in html format with the styles included, which should have been saved as cascading style sheets (in .css format). Style sheets in .css format do not contain html tags, or body tags, but define the overriding styles to be applied to the page, whether it is fonts, table borders or other features. There was a wide diversity of "font-size" settings in the style sheet, many which had no units attached to them so would not work in many web browsers. The most common mistakes were using the incorrect syntax on the "font-family", and missing the units from "font-size". Whilst some of the latest browsers will accept font sizes without a specified pt (for points) or px (for pixels), this will not work on all browsers across the world. Candidates are expected to generate web pages (and hence style sheets) which would appear as expected on any available web browser. A significant number of candidates used the following syntax:

font-family: Arial (sans-serif); or

font-family: "Times New Roman" (serif);

This does not work due to the brackets, correct alternatives might be:

font-family: Arial, sans-serif; or

font-family: "Times New Roman", serif;

Each of these options means that if the first font (e.g. Arial) is not available, the browser defaults to any available sans-serif font.

Once styles have been applied to the page, they should not be over-ridden by other style commands in the html code. Should any proprietary packages do this, candidates should edit the html code in order to remove these elements.

A significant number of candidates did not bother to set a font colour for the style h1. This needed to be set in order to ensure that the style sheet works in any browser. If the default setting of the browser is not black, this font would not appear as expected.

A large number of candidates produced style sheets that were not in .css format. This should contain no html tags, and although one vendors software creates the style sheet with <style> and </style> tags (as well as many others) this does not work in the agreed cascading style sheet format.

Question 18

A small number of candidates did not place their name on the style sheet.

Question 19

Many candidates created the homepage correctly, with all of the items in the correct position although a small number failed to print all the frames where they had chosen to use this method.

Question 20

This question was generally well answered although a few candidates (or their software) tried to over-ride the styles set in the style sheet. Candidates must check the html code to ensure that this does not happen.

Question 21

Several candidates did not place this correctly, a small number failed to set it to h2.

Question 22

A significant number of candidates did not open the file in a new target window called EXTERNAL, many used the default settings of their web authoring package and had not edited this in the html code. One or two candidates set the default window setting to open in the EXTERNAL window. A number of candidates set the title of the page to EXTERNAL rather than the target window.

Question 23

This question was generally well done.

Question 24

This question was generally well done.

Question 25

A small number of candidates failed to set the table border to 6 points.

Question 26

A small number of candidates found the placing of all the elements in the correct table cells difficult, of those who did several forgot to apply the styles from the style sheet.

Question 27

The image was imported and placed correctly by most candidates, the resizing caused more problems, many candidates ignored the instructions and maintained the aspect ratio of the image.

Question 28

This question was generally well done. A small number of candidates created frames, but when printing out the web page only printed out the main frame, forgetting to print the sections for the menu choices and the title. Some candidates failed to produce the html printout as well as the copy from the browser view. Most of the candidates had no trouble attaching the style sheet, however, sometimes the styles would be overridden by inline styles on the page.

Question 29

A number of candidates failed to convert the SWAA6ICO.jpg into a smaller size and then into a more compressed format as a gif file. There is an expectation that when candidates change SWAA6ICO.jpg into gif format that it will retain its original name so should appear as SWAA6ICO.gif. Some candidates had unconventional naming like SWAA6ICO.JPG.GIF which was not given credit.

Question 30

This question was generally well done.

Question 30

This question was generally well done.

Question 31

This question was generally well done, although there were some typing errors in the filename.

Question 32

Many candidates did the printing correctly but had failed to attach the style sheet correctly to this page. In some cases the style sheet used was given an absolute pathway which ensured that this would not run on any browser/machine.

Presentation Authoring

Question 33

The use of the master slide was poorly completed. A significant number of candidates placed their name in the wrong place or omitted the date from the master slide. Similarly the page numbering and placed graphic were not always present on the master slide, in many cases the candidate had not used automatic page numbers and had tried to add these manually to each slide which led to inconsistencies.

Question 34

The colour schemes chosen for this paper allowed for good distinction when printed in black and white. Candidates must ensure that if the centre is using a black and white printer the colours selected give suitable contrast. Some candidates ignored the instructions in **Question 34** and did not change from the default settings of their software package. The failure to right align the headings and not setting the correct point sizes were common errors amongst a large number of candidates.

Question 35

This question was poorly attempted by a large number of candidates. The heading was often incorrectly inserted, not all candidates applied the styles as specified in **Question 34**, particularly relating to right aligning the heading.

Question 36

This question was well answered, the vast majority of candidates scored full marks.

Question 37

A significant number of candidates placed the notes directly onto the slide rather than in the notes section of the package. Some candidates did not use them at all. There were a number of data entry errors in the presenter notes.

Question 38

This question was poorly attempted by a large number of candidates. The heading was often centre aligned or overlapped objects on the master slide.

Question 39

A significant number of candidates placed the bulleted list on the left rather than on the right of the slide, many also failed to left align the bullet points.

Question 40

A significant number of candidates created the wrong type of chart, the majority created a legend. In a handful of cases the legend bore little or no relevance to the chart. A small number of candidates copied the table from the question paper and included this on the slide. A large number failed to annotate each segment of the pie in dollars with no decimal places, the most common error being the use of two decimal places.

Question 41

A number of candidates used a variety of different lines including horizontal, diagonal, arrows and boxes around the heading. Some candidates omitted this instruction completely.

Question 43

A significant number of candidates placed the notes directly onto the slide rather than in the notes section of the package. Some candidates did not use them at all. There were a number of data entry errors in the presenter notes.

Question 44

This question was poorly attempted by a number of candidates. The heading was often centre aligned. A number of candidates also amended the case of part of this heading.

Question 45

Some candidates were inconsistent in the formatting of the bulleted list between slides 2 and 3 with different styles of bullets being used. A few failed to align the bulleted text to the left, aligning the text to the right or to the centre.

Question 46

This question was well answered; the vast majority of candidates attained the mark. A small number of those who had inserted this image, made it overlap the logo on the master slide.

Question 47

A significant number of candidates placed the notes directly onto the slide rather than in the notes section of the package. Some candidates did not use them at all. There were a number of data entry errors in the presenter notes.

Question 50

A significant number of candidates were unable to print the presentation in a format that shows the presenter notes.