

Principal Examiner Feedback

June 2011

International GCSE ICT
(4IT0) Paper 2

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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 first sitting of a practical examination for Edexcel's International GCSE ICT, replacing the externally assessed coursework element of the previous specification. There were just under 4000 candidates sitting the paper. Marks for the paper ranged from 0 to 95. The mean mark was between 51 and 52. The large majority of candidates submitted work for all tasks, though there were a number of candidates who failed to submit some tasks.

Many candidates lose marks because of failure to pay attention to detail. For example:

- 6 marks were available for entering correct formulae into a spreadsheet. Many candidates failed to gain these marks because they did not submit a formula view of the spreadsheet.
- 12 marks were awarded for copying text or images from the data files or from the question paper into documents. Many candidates, it seemed, failed to check the accuracy of their entry. Candidates are advised to check the text that they enter very carefully, especially where the text is given either in the data files or in the question paper.
- Where screen shot evidence was required, many candidates lost marks because their screen shot was cropped or resized so that vital information was not visible and/or not readable.
- Some candidates failed to enter their candidate details on their work. The nature of this examination requires candidates to enter their details before printing to avoid suspicions of collusion by candidates. The instructions appear quite clearly in the question paper, in the specification and in the Instructions for the Conduct of the Examination (ICE) document.

Examiners did not note many centres where there was evidence of candidates accessing the internet during the examination. Internet usage during the examination is a breach of the regulations and may result in candidates being disqualified.

Examiners felt that most candidates were able to complete all the tasks required, though some candidates seemed to run out of time. It is suggested that candidates are advised that they should allocate their time so that they spend approximately one and a half minutes per mark.

Data files

Few issues with data files were reported to Edexcel. One examiner reported that the candidates at one centre appeared not to have used the data files. These files are produced in different formats, so that centres can make sure that the files open using the software available during the examination.

The large majority of candidates completed the examination using Microsoft products. It should be noted that whilst there is no penalty for using software wizards such as Report Wizard in Access, the output from these usually needs to be customised to gain full marks for the tasks.

Centres are reminded that the data files should remain confidential until after all sessions of the examinations have been completed. It is a breach of the regulations for staff to discuss the contents of the data files with candidates. They are made available before the examination for checking that the files work with the

software available during the examination, and then for copying into the candidates' examination folders. Centres are further reminded that a separate user name and user area for each candidate should be set up which is only accessible by that candidate during the examination session. Centres are asked to note that the data files for the 2012 examination will be available for secure download approximately 3 weeks before the examination window.

There are now two sets of Sample Assessment Materials available on the Edexcel website. Copies of the 2011 paper and mark schemes will also be available for use in preparing future candidates.

Labelling and printing

Centres are asked to remind candidates that it is a requirement of this examination that typed candidate details are provided. Experience has shown that where candidates have been encouraged to label all their documents before printing in the normal classroom environment, this is rarely an issue during the stresses of examination work.

Some examiners noted that the quality of printout varied considerably. Centres are asked to try to ensure that the printer is capable of producing satisfactory output during the examination window. The poor quality of some printouts is often to the disadvantage of the candidate when the examiner cannot read or distinguish what the candidate has produced.

Examiners reported that candidates at several centres did not collate their work in the correct order. Many candidates at these centres had their work in an apparently random order. It was also noted by examiners that candidates often did not attach their scripts to the Cover Sheet in the correct manner. The Cover Sheet has a punched hole in the top left corner. Candidates are instructed to put a hole in the top left corner of each page then attach it loosely to the Cover Sheet. The candidates at some centres stapled their work then tied the whole Cover Sheet and script together making it very difficult for the examiner to gain access to the candidate's work. It would be helpful to examiners if cotton were not used.

Some examiners also noted that the work of some centres was not sorted into the same order as the attendance lists. Centres are reminded that they are expected to send the work collated in the correct order.

Resources

The Edexcel website for International GCSE now has two sets of Sample Assessment Materials. The question paper, mark scheme and data files for the 2011 paper will also be available for secure download during the year. In addition, centres are reminded that Edexcel offers the "Ask the Expert" facility on its website, where Senior Examiners can answer questions about the specification and examinations.

SPECIFIC COMMENTS

The examination consisted of 5 activities based on the theme of an Indoor Pentathlon competition.

Activity 1 – Using Art/ Graphics Software

Candidates were presented with a “logo” for the Indoor Pentathlon. They were asked to add a text box to comment on its unsuitability. The majority of candidates correctly added the required text box. Expected responses about suitability were that the image was blurred, the whole image was too dark and that there was insufficient contrast between the text and the background. Responses which did not gain credit included comments about the picture resolution.

Candidates were then asked to create a new logo from the images supplied and include the letters PFC. Most candidates scored well on this task, but lost marks on fitness for purpose, because they used inappropriate images and/or the text size they used was too small. Candidates often didn't appreciate that photographs are rarely used in logos due to the complexity of the pictures. Most effective logos are simple designs using a limited range of colours.

Key areas for improvement:

- understanding of fitness for purpose in images
- understanding aspects of balance in text and images
- use of text boxes to label or annotate work
- being able to compare images to explain strengths and weaknesses.

ACTIVITY 2 – Using Spreadsheet Software

In Activity 2, Task SS1 candidates were provided with a spreadsheet, containing the results of the Boys Competition. They were asked to format the spreadsheet, add a title, insert a new row and enter a new record of data. Most candidates were able to carry out these tasks well and many candidates scored full marks. Candidates who failed to score full marks tended not to be accurate in the entry of the data and did not use borders and shading effectively. They made errors in transcribing the text from the question paper to the spreadsheet. Candidates did not always use shading appropriately. In most cases, a spreadsheet will be read from left to right rather than top to bottom. It is therefore more appropriate to use horizontal shading to make it easier to follow. Vertical shading is more useful when a particular field is being highlighted.

In task SS2, they were asked to add the times up for the competitors and then produce a conditional statement. Common errors in this task were to use an inefficient formula ($= D4+ E4+ F4+ G4+ H4$) rather than using the SUM function. Some candidates included the age column in the total. Those candidates who produced a working IF function, failed to use the correct criterion missing out the = in the statement. This would mean that some competitors, whose total was exactly 2400 seconds, would not have qualified. Further errors included incorrect FALSE messages and truncation of formulae when printed.

In task SS3, candidates were asked to produce a graph for display on the fitness club notice board. Most candidates produced the correct type of graph but lost marks for an insufficient title and axis labels. A number of candidates did not use the full page for their graph and so did not gain the fitness for purpose mark.

Key areas for improvement:

- merging cells
- entering text as given
- formatting of text in a spreadsheet
 - bold
 - italics
 - centring
 - left and right alignment
 - font size
- inserting new rows in the correct location
- using appropriate borders and shading
- formatting of numerical data including decimal places and currency indication (though this was not required in this examination)
- entering simple formulae using the arithmetic operators (*, /, + and -)
- entering formulae using simple functions (e.g. SUM)
- knowing when it is appropriate to use a function like SUM
- correct use of IF functions
- use of logical operators (>, <, and = as well as combinations of these)
- printing formula view of a spreadsheet
- printing without truncation
- producing charts from data in a spreadsheet
- producing appropriate titles and axis labels for a chart
- understanding when a legend is not required for a graph.

ACTIVITY 3 – Using Word Processing Software

In Activity 3, candidates were asked to create a poster to advertise the Indoor Pentathlon, using the logo they created: an image from the data files and a selection of the text from the data file.

The majority of posters were well produced, but lost marks due to lack of careful selection of text. For example, many candidates did not remove the repeated references to Karen Bailes which were present in the data file. Many also failed to include a title for the poster which mentioned the purpose of the poster (i.e. the Indoor Pentathlon). Other items which caused loss of marks were the inclusion of inappropriate external images and making the logo too big so that it dominated the page.

In the second part of the task, candidates were asked to take a screen shot of the whole poster and annotate it with an explanation of a feature used to make the poster fit for purpose. Many candidates lost marks due to not displaying the full page in their screen shot or truncating the image produced. Candidates seemed to misunderstand the instruction to explain features used. Examiners were looking for a description and explanation of formatting features such as use of bold text, increased font size and “WordArt” to display titles. Many candidates described the inclusion of images. This was not accepted as a correct response, because the candidates had been instructed to include these.

Key areas for improvement:

- careful copying of titles from the question paper and/or data files
- careful selection of text from data files
- choice of appropriate images from data files
- use and explanation of formatting features:
 - bold
 - underling
 - italics
 - font sizes
 - font types
 - text alignment
 - text wrapping with images
 - appropriate use of “WordArt”
- appropriate layout for a poster
- use of appropriate sizing for a logo.

ACTIVITY 4 – Using Database Software

Candidates were provided with a database file with two tables. The first table contained information about the competitors for the Indoor Pentathlon. The second was details about the fitness clubs. Candidates were asked to enter new data, sort and search the data, link the tables and produce a report from a query.

In Task DB1, candidates were asked to enter a new record. When entering records into a database it is expected that the format of the existing records will provide guidance for how new data is to be added. In the database provided, last names were capitalised. It was therefore expected that candidates would enter the last name of the new competitor in this format. In the paper, the date of birth was presented as 7 May 1985. It was therefore expected that candidates would match the date format to the other dates in the database. Many candidates entered a date which would be calculated as 5 July rather than 7 May. There were a few candidates who did not present the table in landscape format. Most candidates sorted the table correctly.

For Task DB2, candidates were asked to carry out two searches. For the first, a simple single criterion was required. Most candidates scored both marks on this part of the task. Those that did not generally failed to show all fields. The second query was more complex, requiring a search on two fields and sorting. Candidates were asked to display the query design rather than the results of the search. Marks were awarded from the results view, where the evidence was present. However many candidates failed to produce a screen shot of the design or truncated parts of the design so that not all marks were gained.

For task DB3, candidates were asked to link the two tables and then produce a search using both tables. Many candidates linked the tables, but did not make the link “1-to-many” and therefore lost the second mark. They were asked to identify a primary key in the tables. Most candidates correctly identified one or both of the two primary keys. A large number of candidates were unable to produce the required query results. This may have been due to errors in creating the relationship.

For Task DB4, candidates were asked to produce a database report using the query results of the search in DB3. Those candidates who succeeded in creating the report generally lost marks for unsuitable titles and not following instructions about the order of fields in the report. Several also failed to customise the column headings to more meaningful titles such as First name in place of FName.

Key areas for improvement:

- entering data as required using existing format of other records as a guide
- sorting ascending and descending order
- printing in landscape/portrait
- printing without truncation
- displaying all / selected fields in output
- simple searches
- searches using multiple criteria
- creating relationships / links between tables
- identifying primary keys
- searching on related tables
- producing database reports from the results of queries
- using the question to identify suitable titles for a report
- ordering columns correctly in a report
- using appropriate column headings in a report
- producing a report with appropriate spacing between columns.

ACTIVITY 5 – Using Presentation Software

Candidates were provided with a storyboard and the first slide for a presentation to advertise the Indoor Pentathlon. They were asked to make changes to the master slide and then create the other three slides in the presentation.

Most candidates managed to make the required changes. However, many failed to display the master slide and did not identify the changes they had made. It was also noted by examiners that changes made to the master slide were not always seen in the rest of the presentation.

A large number of candidates failed to select text and appropriate images from the data files. In selecting the text, candidates were expected to appreciate that a large amount of text is inappropriate on a slide presentation, since it tends to make the text too small to read. Many candidates failed to appreciate that images of horse riding were inappropriate for a presentation about the indoor events listed. Very few candidates failed to present their work two slides per page.

In the second part of the presentation task, candidates were asked to make changes to the slides. Firstly, they were asked to modify one of the slides to target a different audience and secondly, change a different slide to enable the presentation to run without user intervention. Many good responses were received for the first part of this question, but few candidates mentioned both transition and looping in the second part. Screen shots for the second part of the question also often failed to show the transition speed clearly, usually because the screen shot was too small.

Key areas for improvement:

- careful copying of titles from the question paper and/or data files
- amending a master slide for use
- careful selection of text to make it suitable for display
- use of a storyboard to guide layout
- careful selection of relevant images
- printing a presentation in different ways (e.g. slides, handouts, notes)
- identifying transition and looping as requirements for automated presentations.

Grade Boundaries

Centres are reminded that the International GCSE is an Awarded qualification. As such, grade boundaries are subject to review each series.

<http://www.edexcel.com/iwantto/Pages/grade-boundaries.aspx>

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