

Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2012

International GCSE ICT (4IT0/02)

Paper 2

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 second series of Edexcel's International GCSE ICT. There were approximately 4000 candidates sitting the practical paper. Marks ranged from 0 to 95 with the mean mark being 53. The large majority of candidates submitted work for all tasks.

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

- 10 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. Often other printouts suggested that they may have done correct calculations.
- 13 marks were awarded for copying selected text or images from the data files or the question paper into documents. Many candidates, it seemed, failed to check the accuracy of their entry. Candidates are advised to check very carefully the text that they enter, 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 the vital information was not visible 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 and in the specification and in the Instructions for the Conduct of the Examination (ICE) document.

Examiners were pleased to note that very few candidates appeared to have accessed the internet during the examination. Internet usage during the examination is a breach of the regulations and may result in candidates being disqualified.

Examiners noted 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. In this series guidance was provided about the length of time candidates should spend on each activity. This practice will be continued in future series.

Data files

Few issues with the data files were reported to Edexcel. 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.

Centre staff 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 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 candidates' examination folders. A backup copy in a sub-folder is useful to enable candidates to re-start tasks should they wish to do so.

Centre staff should note that the data files for the 2013 examination will be available by secure download from the Edexcel website approximately 2 weeks before the examination window.

Labelling and printing

Centre staff should remind candidates that it is a requirement of this examination that typed candidate details are expected on all printouts. Experience has shown that where candidates 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 candidate when the examiner cannot read or distinguish what the candidate has produced. Centre staff should note that there is no extra credit for printing in colour. Where candidates 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 candidates where printouts are in monochrome.

Examiners reported that candidates at several centres did not collate their work in the correct order. It was also noted that candidates often did not attach their scripts to the cover sheet in the correct manner. The cover sheet, when opened, has a punched hole in the top left corner. Candidates 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 candidate's work is face up on the left with the marking grid on the right. Candidates at some centres make it very difficult for the examiner to gain access to the work by the way they submit their work. 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 of 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 Edexcel website. Copies of the 2011 and 2012 papers, data files and mark schemes will also be available for use in preparing future candidates.

In addition, centre staff are reminded that Edexcel 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 InterAYR, a travel company.

Activity 1 – Using Art/ Graphics Software

Candidates were presented with a photograph of a plane. They were asked to crop the image to remove as much of the background as possible whilst keeping the image rectangular. Most candidates scored well on this task, though some lost marks for not cropping sufficiently close to the plane or cropping too much so that parts of the plane itself were removed.

They were then asked to modify an image of a plane which lacked contrast and add specified text to the plane. Many candidates seemed to misunderstand the instruction to add the text on the side of the plane. Instead they added the text below the plane. Quite a few candidates failed to amend the colour scheme sufficiently to make the logo stand out from the background.

Key areas for improvement:

- being able to crop images carefully
- understanding the need for contrast in images and text
- understanding aspects of balance in text and images
- understanding of fitness for purpose in images.

ACTIVITY 2 – Using Database Software

Candidates were provided with a database file with two tables. The first table contained information about the customers of InterAYR. The second included details about some airports.

Candidates were asked to produce a data entry form, enter new data, sort and search the data and produce a report from a query.

In Task DB1, candidates were asked to create a data entry form for the CUSTOMER table, enter a new record, sort and print the table. Many candidates used a form wizard to produce the entry form. Whilst these will gain some marks, candidates are expected to customise the form so that data entry is easier to use and prompts are more descriptive than LNAME or DEST. Many candidates appeared to ignore the instruction to use drop down selection field for at least one of the fields. Screen shots of the data entry form were often truncated or produced so small that some of the evidence was not readable.

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. Candidates need to check carefully especially with date fields where the format can vary between DD/MM/YYYY and MM/DD/YYYY. Examiners gave credit to candidates who entered the correct date in the same format as other records. Most candidates sorted and printed the table correctly.

For Task DB2, candidates were asked to carry out two searches. For the first, a simple single criterion was required and selected fields were to be printed. Most candidates scored all four marks on this part of the task. Those that did not, generally failed to show the correct fields. The second query was more complex requiring a search using \geq . Quite a few candidates did not include the $=$ symbol and so returned the incorrect number of records. Most candidates showed the correct fields for this second query.

For Task DB3, candidates were asked to carry out a complex search on the two related tables and display the query design view 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.

As the final part of task DB3, candidates were asked to produce a database report from the results of the search in the first part of the task. The report included a requirement to carry out a primary sort on CITY and a secondary sort on DATE. Many candidates did not do the sort correctly often only sorting in order of date. Also if candidates use a Report Wizard, they are expected to customise the report so that column headings and that spacing of columns are appropriate for publication.

Key areas for improvement:

- producing a customised data entry form
- including drop down fields to restrict entry
- entering data as required using existing format of other records as a guide
- producing screenshot evidence which is readable and not truncated
- sorting ascending and descending order
- printing in landscape/portrait
- printing without truncation
- displaying all / selected fields in output
- simple searches
- searches using multiple criteria
- 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
- primary and secondary sorting
- using appropriate column headings in a report
- producing a report with appropriate spacing between columns.

ACTIVITY 3 – Using Web Authoring Software

In Activity 3, candidates were asked to create a web page to advertise a special offer during September using the logo they created, an image from the data files and a selection of the text from the data file. They were given the structure for the page and information about the house style for the web site.

The majority of web pages were well produced but lost marks due to lack of careful selection of text and images. For example, many candidates included the text and images relating to offers for July, August and December which were present in the data files. Many also failed to include a suitable title for the page which identified what the page was about – sometimes the title used was a website title than a page title and did not relate to the special offer. Other items which caused loss of marks were the inclusion of inappropriate images and incorrect spelling in the contact details.

Key areas for improvement:

- careful copying of titles and text from the question paper and/or data files
- careful selection of appropriate text from data files
- choice of appropriate images from data files
- applying a given house style to a web page
- use of appropriate sizing for a logo
- printing a document to show the full page/screen at a suitable size.

ACTIVITY 4 – Using Spreadsheet Software

In Activity 4, candidates were provided with a spreadsheet containing data about ticket prices for several airports. They were asked to add titles, format, sort, enter formulae and produce a graph to analyse the data.

In task SS1, they were asked to insert an appropriate title and sort and format the table of data. Many candidates did not use a suitable title for the spreadsheet and formatting was generally poorly done. For example, in order to make the information clearer horizontal shading is far preferable to vertical shading. Often candidates used borders but occasionally these were included around blank rows which make the borders less useful in enhancing the spreadsheet. Sorting was done well by the majority of candidates but several only sorted the first column and did not include the associated data in the other columns.

In Task SS2, candidates were required to add a label then enter some relatively simple formulae to multiply two cells and create a total. Most candidates scored well on this task but marks were sometimes lost by inefficient use of the SUM function with several candidates using formulae such as = SUM(B4* D4) or = E4+ E5+ E6+ E7+ E8+ E9.

In Task SS3, candidates were asked to do further calculations using an absolute cell reference. Several candidates failed to enter the constant value into a suitable cell and used the value directly into the formula (e.g. = C4* 0.15). This is an inefficient use of a spreadsheet since it makes amending the constant value (as required by task SS4 for example) more difficult.

In Task SS4, candidates were required to find the minimum value of charge per kilometre so that the overall income was the same as the previous ticket prices. This could either be done by trial and error (changing the value in stages from 0.15 to 0.12) or using the 'Goal Seek' facility. Very few

candidates managed to gain the marks for identifying the correct value of £0.12.

In the second part of the task, candidates were required to format the resulting spreadsheet so that currency values had a currency symbol and were showing two decimal places. It was acknowledged that computer systems internationally were not always set to display the British currency symbol and examiners accepted any currency symbol as an appropriate answer for this marking point.

In Task SS5, candidates were required to produce a graph which compared the previous ticket prices with the new prices. Most candidates scored well on this task though marks were often lost for poor titles and axis labels. A small number of candidates used the incorrect data range.

Key areas for improvement:

- entering text as given
- formatting of text in a spreadsheet – for example:
 - 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
- 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 absolute cell references
- replication of formulae
- use of logical operators (>, <, and =; as well as combinations of these)
- printing formula view or data view of a spreadsheet
- printing without truncation
- producing suitable charts from data in a spreadsheet
- producing appropriate titles and axis labels for a chart
- understanding when a legend is required for a graph.

ACTIVITY 5 – Using Word Processing Software

In Task WP1a, candidates were asked to prepare a memo from Angela (the owner) to Pauline Moores (a Junior Staff representative) to ask her to attend the next meeting of Senior Staff in order to discuss a bonus scheme for the staff at InterAYR. It was felt by examiners that the majority of submissions by candidates suggested that they did not have a clear knowledge of the conventional layout of a memo. Many printouts were presented more like letters. A possible explanation for this is that memos are increasingly being replaced by organisations by alternative communications such as email and text or instant messaging.

In Task WP1b, were asked to complete the production of Angela's report to the senior staff meeting. They were provided with a text file and were required to insert extracts from previous tasks format it appropriately. Most candidates who attempted this task integrated the necessary items but formatting was often unsuitable with the extracts poorly laid out or sized inappropriately.

Key areas for improvement:

- careful copying of text from the question paper and/or data files
- understanding and use of layout conventions for common document types such as memo and report
- integration of text and images/extracts from spreadsheets and/or databases
- consistent formatting of text and images.

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