

Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2014

Pearson Edexcel

International GCSE in Information and
Communication Technology (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 fourth series of Edexcel's International GCSE ICT. There were approximately 4500 candidates sitting this practical paper. Marks ranged from 0 to 95 with the mean mark of 53.5. The large majority of candidates submitted work for all tasks.

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

- 13 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. A smaller number of candidates lost marks for failing to submit a printout of the data view. In these cases it was not possible to award some of the formatting marks.
- Other marks were lost due to inaccuracies where candidates were asked to enter data given on 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.
- Fewer candidates failed to enter their candidate details on their work. However it should be noted that 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 there was little evidence that any candidates were able to access the internet during the examination. Internet usage during this 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 a small number of 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.

Unfortunately, in Task SS4, the question paper required candidates to print out the worksheet 'INVOICE'. Whilst the worksheet was described in the paper as an invoice, the data file worksheet was actually called GROUP. This did not seem to cause many candidates difficulties as the large majority of candidates did print out a formula view of the appropriate worksheet and gained marks for their formulae.

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 2014 examination will be available by secure download from the Edexcel website approximately 2 weeks before the examination window.

Labelling and printing

A comment from some centres focussed on the labelling of tasks and printouts particularly in reference to Task WP1 which required candidates to collate a document with extracts from the other tasks. Staff at these centres felt that there was some confusion where they were asked to include a copy of one of the slides they had produced in Task PS1(b) in Task WP1. The comment made by the staff was that there was no printout for the Task (PS1(b)).

The formatting of the paper is such that when candidates 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 PS1(b), candidates are not required to print out their work until later in the activity.

In marking Activity 5, the focus was on the inclusion of one of the slides and credit was given to candidates who had inserted one of the slides from Activity 4. Few candidates who attempted Activity 5 failed to include a slide from Activity 4.

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 presentation 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. This was often repeated by all candidates at a centre which suggests that the candidates had been incorrectly instructed by Centre staff. 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, 2012, 2013 and 2014 papers, data files and mark schemes and examiners reports are also 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 PMMM Cycles who rent out bicycles.

Activity 1 – Using Spreadsheet Software

In Activity 1, candidates were provided with a spreadsheet containing two worksheets which held data about the income and costs of hiring bicycles. As usual they were asked to sort, enter formulae, add titles, format and produce a graph to analyse the data.

In task SS1, they were asked to sort the table of data. This was a relatively simple task which the majority of candidates managed successfully. However some candidates lost marks because they did not maintain the integrity of the data and sorted only the single column.

In Task SS2, candidates were required to enter relatively simple formulae to add four cells and then multiply two cells to create a total. Finally they were asked to add column labels and an overall 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(B5* G5) or = C5+ D5+ E5+ F5. A significant but not large number of candidates lost several marks on this task because they did not print out a formula view of the spreadsheet.

In Task SS3, the candidates were asked to produce a relatively straightforward graph showing the number of rentals of each bicycle type each week. Candidates need to be taught that a graph which is fit for purpose will be a suitable chart type, have the correct data, have appropriate titles and axis labels and a legend when necessary to identify the different data series. Many candidates fail to score as well as they could because they do not include the appropriate items.

For Task SS4, candidates were asked to enter the formulae to create an invoice for a customer of the rental company. The formulae required the use of an IF function for one of the cells. They were then asked to enter some data and format the worksheet to make it fit for purpose as an invoice. In the final part of the task they were asked to comment on how the invoice had been formatted to make it fit for purpose. Most candidates made some progress with the formulae but again several lost marks because they did not submit a formula view of the spreadsheet. Examiners were surprised by the number of candidates who failed to check that the information that they had entered matched the data in the question paper.

Key areas for improvement:

- accuracy in copying data into a spreadsheet
- 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)
- knowing when it is appropriate to use a function like SUM
- 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.

ACTIVITY 2 – Using Web Authoring Software

Candidates were asked to crop an image of an a cyclist for use in a web page. They were asked to crop some unnecessary features. It should be noted that candidates were not expected to spend a long time on this part of the task. It was disappointing that so many candidates produced an image where the cyclist or the bicycle were cropped excessively. They were then asked to use resources that were provided to create a web page to a given page layout design. The creation of the page could have been done in any suitable software and many candidates chose to use Microsoft Publisher or Microsoft Word. Most candidates scored well on the insertion of items but then several lost marks because they did not use the layout in the question paper. At the end of the Activity the candidates were asked to explain how formatting features they had used made the page fit for purpose and describe one change that could be made to make the page more accessible. Responses were disappointing with few explaining the changes they identified and many vague answers.

Key areas for improvement:

- being able to crop images carefully
- understanding of fitness for purpose in images
- integrating text and images for a web page
- using appropriate fonts for a web page
- applying a design layout provided
- identifying and explaining the purpose of formatting features
- explaining how documents can be altered for different audiences

ACTIVITY 3 – Using Database Software

Candidates were provided with a database file with three tables. The first table contained information about the customers of the rental company. The second included details about the bicycles and the third had details of rentals that had been made.

Candidates were asked to create a data entry form, sort and search the data, link the tables and produce a database report.

In Task DB1, candidates were asked to create a data entry form. Whilst most candidates produced a form, too many relied on the form creation wizards within the software and did not use any customisation features to make the form easier to use. Suitable features would include editing the field labels to make them more understandable and using dropdowns for title and gender. Many candidates did not give an acceptable response to the questions about field types and use of drop down lists in a form.

The second part of DB1 was to sort and print the table. This was done well by the majority of the candidates.

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 the marks on this part of the task. Those that did not gain full marks tended to search on the title field rather than the gender field or did not print the correct fields. The second query to find records matching multiple criteria was generally done well and most candidates managed to include just the required fields in this task.

For Task DB3, candidates were asked to link the three tables using appropriate relationships and to identify the primary key in one of the relationships. Many candidates lost marks because they did not display the correct type of relationship. Most of these showed only many-to-many relationships rather than the one-to-many expected. The second part of DB3 was to design a query to identify rentals on the Mondays in May. This proved quite challenging for many candidates with some confusing OR and AND in the criteria.

In Task DB4, candidates were asked to produce a report using the results of the query from Task DB3. Most of the candidates who achieved some success in Task DB3 were able to produce a suitable report using the report wizards but lost marks for a poor title and lack of customisation of the field headings.

Key areas for improvement:

- producing a customised data entry form
- use of drop down fields to restrict entry
- understanding of field data types
- sorting ascending and descending order
- printing in landscape/portrait
- printing without truncation
- simple searches
- searches using multiple criteria
- displaying all / selected fields in output
- linking tables appropriately

- producing screenshot evidence which is readable and not truncated
- searching on related tables
- producing customised database reports

ACTIVITY 4 – Using Presentation Software

Candidates were provided with the title slide for a presentation. They were required to make changes to the master slides and then produce three additional slides. They were provided with a design layout in the question paper. Finally they were asked questions which tested their understanding of audience and purpose.

Candidates were asked to make several changes to the master slide. These included adding a logo and footer details and changing the font. Many candidates failed to display the master slide and so were unable to gain full marks for this part of the task.

Using a design layout included in the question paper, candidates were then asked to produce three slides about the bicycle tour. Surprisingly some candidates produced more slides than were required or failed to gain marks because their slides did not match the layout of the design in the question paper. Some candidates used inappropriate images in their slides and did not edit the text information to make it suitable for a presentation.

Key areas for improvement:

- editing a master slide
 - adding logos
 - adding footers
 - changing font styles
- careful copying of titles and text from the question paper and/or data files
- careful selection and editing of text from data files
- choice of appropriate images from data files
- applying a given design layout to a set of slides
- use of appropriate sizing for a logo
- printing a presentation as handouts (2 to a page)
- producing appropriate screenshots to show evidence of work

ACTIVITY 5 – Using Word Processing Software

Candidates were asked to prepare a report integrating the text from a file with extracts from the other activities in the examination. Most candidates who attempted this task managed to include all the required items. However they tended to lose marks for using poor layout and formatting.

Key areas for improvement:

- careful copying of text from the question paper
- understanding and use of layout conventions for common document types such as reports
- integrating a text document and images (including charts, database tables and screen shots)
- consistent formatting of text and images
- cropping of unnecessary details from screen shots

Grade Boundaries

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

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

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