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# Examiner's Report Principal Examiner Feedback

## Summer 2018

Pearson Edexcel International GCSE  
In Information and Communication  
Technology (4IT0) Paper 2

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Publications Code 4IT0\_02\_1806\_ER

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## General Comments

This was the eighth and final series of 2009 Specification of Pearson's International GCSE ICT. The 2017 Specification is an update of the qualification. One of the major changes is the format of the paper for the practical examination. Please refer to the new specification (obtainable from <https://qualifications.pearson.com/en/home.html>) for more details.

There were approximately 5000 students the practical paper in this series. The large majority of students submitted work for all tasks. Students who did not submit all tasks generally failed to submit work for Activity 3 – Web Authoring and / or Activity 5 – Word Processing.

Students continue to lose marks because a lack of attention to detail. For example:

- 14 marks were available for entering correct formulae into a spreadsheet. A number of students failed to gain many of marks for this 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 data entry – particularly in the database and graphics 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 in this series failed to enter their students 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 by students. 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 accessed 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 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 might spend on each activity.

## Data files

There were a few issues with the data files reported to Pearson. It seems that very few centres reproduced the files from the instructions in the Notes for Centres. The notes are provided for centres who do not use Microsoft Office products.

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 the appropriate 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. Where centre staff need to re-create the files, it is important that copies of the files created are included with the scripts so that the examiner can check that any differences from the original data files are a centre issue rather than a student issue.

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 second copy in a sub-folder of the students exam folder is useful to enable them to re-start tasks should they wish to do so.

## 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 (eg **Task PS1(b)**). When instructions are given to save or resave documents then upper case is used for the file names (eg Save the spreadsheet as **TASK SS2**).

Centre staff should remind students that it is a requirement of this examination that typed students 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. Students do need to check that the quality of the printout provides the evidence

necessary to give credit to their work. In this year's examination, some of the work for the web authoring activity could not be seen due to the dark background used by the student.

Examiners reported that students at several centres did not collate their work in the correct order. It was also noted that they 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 they 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 approximately 1cm from the top left corner of the front of each printout, then attach the printouts to the cover sheet so that when the cover sheet is opened by the examiner the students' 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, 2016, 2017 and 2018 question papers, data files, mark schemes and examiners reports are also available for use in preparing future students – though please note that the format of the updated specification should be reviewed with the Specimen Papers that are available on the Pearson website.

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

## **Future Examinations**

As this is the last paper for this specification, key areas for improvement are not included in this report. However, it would be appropriate that comments made in previous reports be considered when preparing students for the new specification.

The 2018 paper will be the last series using this specification. The replacement specification, 4IT1 – International GCSE Information and Communication Technology (9-1), is available on the Pearson website and should be used for teaching the two year course starting in September 2017. The new specification will be graded on the 9 to 1 scale rather than A\* to G. Further information about these changes are available on the Pearson Qualifications website.

## **Specific Comments**

The examination consisted of 5 activities based on the theme of a badminton club.

### **Activity 3: Using Art / Imaging and Graphics Software**

Activity 1 consisted of two parts.

In AG1, students were asked to create a logo for the 2018 badminton competition combining text given in the question paper and an image selected from the data files folder. They were then asked to comment on the features of a good logo.

Many students produced good quality logos. Where the logos produced were less good, this was often due to poor balance between the text and the selected image. Several students – though probably fewer than in previous series – selected a photograph rather than a line drawing.

Answers about the features of a good logo often focussed too much on describing specific aspects of the logo they had created rather than more general features such as selection of a vector image which is easily resized for different end products.

In AG2, students were asked to edit a given image by cropping and amending part of the background. Most students made a reasonable attempt at cropping, though some cropped either too much or too little. Attempts to amend the background of the image (by removing a window in the wall behind the group) were variable. Many students made use of overlaying a small section of the wall to hide the window.

The question about the benefit of reducing the size of the image for use on a website was less well answered with many students providing vague answers about space on the website for more information.

### **Activity 2: Using Database Software**

Students were provided with a database file with four tables of data about the badminton club.

In Task DB1, students were asked to enter a new record and sort the data in the PLAYER 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.

The students were then asked to explain why the telephone numbers were of data type: text rather than date type: number and why it was more appropriate to store the date of birth rather than age. Many students

identified features of telephone numbers (eg inclusion of spaces) and date of birth (eg constant value) but failed to gain the second mark for explaining why this feature was important (being not acceptable in a number format, no need to update the database).

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 gain full marks gave incorrect search criteria or displayed incorrect fields.

In Task DB3(a), students were asked to identify the primary key in a relationship and explain why a relationship in the database was one-to-many. Unfortunately, these were not answered well. It often seems that students are able to create and use database structures but do not always understand the reasons for the structures.

For Task DB3(b), students were asked to create a query to find records of male players who had bought a large shirt. Many students did not check that their output matched the requirements and ended up with a list which included female players and / or multiple different sizes of shirt. A large percentage of students failed to sort the results in the required order.

In Task DB4, students were required to produce a database report based on the query produced in Task DB3(b). The higher performing students managed to produce good reports but often lost marks due to inconsistencies in the customisation of column headings and use of a poor title.

### **Activity 3: Using Web Authoring Software**

Whilst the activity is described as using web authoring software, students are informed at the start of the activity that any suitable software is acceptable for this activity. Appropriate web pages can be produced using a variety of software including dedicated web authoring software such as Adobe Dreamweaver and multipurpose software such as Microsoft Word. The requirement is that the software is able to save the documents as hypertext mark-up language files. Microsoft Publisher and Microsoft PowerPoint, therefore, are not really suitable for this purpose.

Students were asked to use resources that were provided to create four web pages based on the page design in the question paper using resources provided. Most students produced appropriate content for the web pages though use of the page design was less obvious at times. There was often an issue with seeing the content because students used a yellow background colour that was too dark when printed on a monochrome printer. A quick check of the printout would have alerted the students to this issue and could have resulted in higher marks. Students should be reminded that examiners cannot credit work if it is not readable.

In the second part of this activity, students were asked to produce a screen shot of the source code of one of the pages and identify the hypertext code for the link to one of the other pages. This was not done

very well by many students and was often being evidenced by the hyperlink insertion tool rather than the source code.

#### **Activity 4: Using Spreadsheet Software**

In Activity 1, students were provided with a spreadsheet containing one worksheet which held data about shirt purchases. They were asked to enter formulae, sort, format a worksheet and produce a graph to analyse some of the data.

In Task SS1, students were required to enter a range of formulae to calculate the total number of shirts sold. This was done well by the majority of students. However, some failed to get full marks because they failed to provide a formula view of the worksheet.

In Task SS2, students were asked to calculate the profit per shirt and the pre-tax price of each shirt. Most students were able to produce the correct formulae but some lost marks because they did not include absolute cell references for the percentage profit.

Task SS3 was very similar to Task SS2 in that it required students to calculate the sales tax on each shirt. Many students lost marks because they based their calculation on the cost of the shirt rather than the pre-tax price that they were informed about in the question. Again, marks were sometimes lost because students did not include the absolute cell reference for the percentage sales tax.

In Task SS4, students were asked to calculate the total profit for each type of shirt, the total profit and the average profit per shirt. This task was not done well by many of the students with a large number not realising that the average profit depended on the number of shirts sold and many incorrectly used the average function rather than dividing the total profit by the total sales.

Task SS5 consisted of two parts. The first was to explain the purpose of using absolute cell references in a spreadsheet formula. Whilst many students realised that it was for a constant value, few commented on the benefit when replicating the formula. The second part asked students to identify and explain how a formatting feature they had used improved the presentation of the worksheet. This was answered much better by the students, though occasionally the explanations were rather vague.

In Task SS6, students were asked to produce a chart to display the cost of each type of shirt. 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.



## **Activity 5: Using Word Processing Software**

Usually Activity 5 has consisted of producing a document which integrates text and images.

In this series, students were asked to produce a merged letter. To start this, they were required to create a letterhead combining the logo they created with the contact details printed in the question paper. Most students managed to combine these though some lost marks for poor layout or incorrect copying of the details from the paper.

Having created the letterhead, they were then required to insert the contents of a draft letter edited to include the date, complimentary closure. These edits were generally well completed.

Students were then asked to use columns from a spreadsheet file to insert the recipient's address, greeting and team name in identified locations within the letter. Unfortunately, this was not done well, with few students inserting the correct fields with appropriate spacing. Many students failed to include a copy of the letter showing the merge fields.

As the final part of the activity, students were asked to complete the merge and print one copy of the letter. This was usually successfully completed though some students lost marks by including two or three letters.

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