Candidate Booklet

To be issued to candidates on or after Wednesday 15 March 2017.

Information

- The Preliminary Material is to be seen by teachers and candidates only, for use during preparation for the examination on Friday 16 June 2017. It cannot be used by anyone else for any other purpose, other than as stated in the instructions issued, until after the examination date has passed.

  It must not be provided to third parties.
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Information and Guidance

1 On receipt of this booklet, you are advised to check carefully that it is complete and that no pages are missing or illegible. There should be 8 pages. If there are any problems you should consult your teacher.

2 The material contained in this booklet is provided for you to use in preparing for Section A of the INFO3 examination.

3 Prior to the examination, your teacher will give you assistance and advice to help you understand the content of this material.

4 You should use the time between receiving this material and the examination to familiarise yourself with its contents.

5 You are allowed to make comments or annotations on this copy of the material but you are not allowed to take this copy, or any other materials, into the examination.

6 A clean copy of this booklet will be provided in the examination with the INFO3 question paper and therefore there is no benefit from learning the contents by rote.

7 The INFO3 examination is on Friday 16 June 2017 (morning session).
The Interview

Her boyfriend’s words lingered in Kirsty’s mind as she gazed out of the train window. Why hadn’t he been more supportive? Was he right about the scale of ICT making a difference?

The beep of an incoming text broke her thoughts. But it wasn’t him, just an old school friend. She smiled at the cheeky good luck message.

Kirsty wanted this job. She’d worked hard and her employer, a firm of bathroom fitters, was pleased with her efforts. But she was ready for a change. Her CV must have been OK or they wouldn’t have called her for interview. She reread the letter, noting that the topics mentioned for discussion were rather vague. Would she be able to understand the property letting business? Perhaps she was expected to have done some research, but she didn’t know where to begin.

She was startled when the smart, middle aged man in the seat opposite began to talk to her. He leaned across the table.

“Excuse me for asking but I’d guess you’re going for an interview. Am I right? The outfit’s the giveaway, you know.”

Kirsty nodded and smiled. Normally she wouldn’t talk to a complete stranger in a railway carriage, but the man seemed pleasant enough and his interest was kindly, rather than openly inquisitive. She made a quick decision and pushed the letter over to him.

“Hmm, Systems Developer. I had a job like that years ago. A different title, though.”

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“Hmm, Systems Developer. I had a job like that years ago. A different title, though.”

Seeing Kirsty’s sceptical look, he added, “Older people do know about ICT. It’s not just the preserve of the young. Do you want to talk about the interview? I might be able to help. Oh, I’m Des, by the way.”

Kirsty saw no harm in humouring this Des guy, who seemed keen to impart his knowledge, even if it was possibly well past its sell-by date. It might, just might, help her chances. She flicked through the company information she’d been sent. Perhaps he could help her understand the business.

“Do you know anything about the property letting business? This says the company’s based in London, with several branches throughout the city. It wants to expand by selling franchises to estate agents across the country, using a client/server system.”
She turned over the page. “It says that property, tenant and landlord details are to be held centrally on a relational database, but with local and transactional data held on PCs in the estate agents’ offices, with local systems to support them. Does that make any sense to you?”

“I guess so,” said Des. “In a franchise situation, the head office usually deals with corporate advertising, legal support and the provision of central systems, leaving the estate agents to get on with selling. All the estate agent needs to get going is an office, some staff, PCs, some office software and printers – plus, of course, money to pay for the franchise, including the client software.”

Des paused. “Thinking about it, I imagine the systems could be reasonably complex. Data will need to be held about landlords, tenants and properties, with names, addresses, contact numbers and so on. Also, personal details about the tenants will be stored, including employer references, credit rating, deposits and bank details. Property descriptions will need to be maintained, such as whether it’s a flat or house, the number of bedrooms, date of the last gas safety check, council tax banding, parking, distance from nearest station, etcetera.”

Kirsty noted all this down, with visions of tables, keys and foreign keys going through her head. In his stride now, Des continued.

“And there’d be a fair amount of data access and processing. The agent’s commission will need to be calculated. They do like their commission, you know! VAT will need to be worked out and regular statements for the landlords and tenants printed or emailed. A diary system will be needed and payment facilities developed for tradesmen. And then there’s the work involved in marketing the properties, such as handling photographs, printing brochures and so on. It could be interesting, if you like that sort of thing.”

“Thanks for that,” said Kirsty. “I think perhaps they selected me because of my work on PC systems for a bathroom fitting company. At least there’s some common ground, particularly in the area of hardware installation.”

Des nodded. “They certainly expect a lot. Hardware installation as well, you say? Hmm, just make sure you make a plan of activities – there’s more to hardware installation than you think.”

He continued. “And you mentioned that it’s a client/server system. You know what a client/server system is, of course? From my experience, such systems are not without issues. OK, let’s talk about those discussion topics mentioned in the letter. Do any of them bother you?”

“Some do. Take this one.” Kirsty pointed to the first topic on the list. “Previously they’d tried to develop a new system, but the project failed and so they want to discuss with me the factors that contribute to a successful project. I know the main factors, but have no idea what to say if asked which factor is the most important. What would you say?”

“That’s easy,” replied Des, without hesitation. “Having a strong and capable project leader is vitally important. Someone with energy, who’s prepared to deal with all the different types of problems likely to be faced in an ICT project, whether they’re users who are unable to make up their minds, sponsors who lose enthusiasm, or a lack of resources. You need a project leader who’s able to take the team hand-in-hand through the fire and out the other end, stronger and more able to face
the next project.”

Des smiled and lifted his left hand off the table. “I married mine, by the way.”

“Thanks,” said Kirsty, slightly relieved to know that Des was married. “You’ve painted a vivid picture there. Another topic is development methodologies. Apparently they’re going to ask me about different types…”

Des interrupted and held his hand up, the palm facing Kirsty. “Trust me, you must only use a traditional structured development methodology, with sign-offs at each stage. Then you’ve nailed the users’ requirements and they won’t be able to stitch you up with changes or afterthoughts and then blame you for any delay. Believe me, all other methods are useless.”

Kirsty politely listened to Des’ opinion on development methodologies, whilst privately thinking that following his advice might be unwise. She enquired quietly, “Are you still in ICT then, Des?”

“Only indirectly now. I’m in security, and that has a significant ICT content these days.”

Sensing this was one area where Des might have some current knowledge, Kirsty enquired how information stored by the client/server systems could be protected from unauthorised access. She made notes and thanked him.

“Just one last thing you might be able to help me with. My boyfriend says there’s a big difference between the ICT used in a small organisation and ICT used in a large one. What do you think?”

“That’s easy. I’d say there are far more similarities than differences. Sorry, this is my station. Must dash. Good luck with the interview.”

Later, as she waited in reception to be called, Kirsty contemplated Des’ advice – what she agreed with and what she didn’t. With finality, she turned off her mobile. If she got the job, at least the company should be able to find her a place to live.

She took a deep breath and walked confidently through the door.

END OF PRELIMINARY MATERIAL
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