A level
ICT
INFO4
Report on the Examination

INFO4
June 2017

Version: v1.0
General Comments
Administration and marking of student work was good in most cases this year, with well-presented projects accompanied by correct administration documentation and comprehensively annotated marking grids. However centres that do not use marking grids correctly often award overly high marks that need adjustment.

This unit provides students with the opportunity to complete a substantial project involving the production of an ICT-related system over an extended period of time. In so doing, students will enhance their transferable practical skills.

It is expected that students will investigate a realistic situation and then develop a substantial solution that will meet their identified client’s needs. In so doing, a thorough analysis of the current situation and problem is required.

The importance of the project selection is an area that is still a concern in some places both in terms of creating material for assessment and also in the development of students’ understanding of the project development process. It has been shown over the years that those students who have a genuine and realistic problem to tackle generally perform better when showing an understanding of the development process. Where students develop similar solutions based on detailed guidance they sometimes miss an opportunity to show understanding, producing generic textbook explanations that cannot be awarded the higher marks in some rows.

Background and Investigation
This area was generally well-marked by teachers, reflecting students’ ability to define the background of a problem and investigate the client needs.

Most students failed to demonstrate an understanding of system environment. It was common to describe a physical environment but little attention was paid to the systems that would affect and be affected by the solution.

One important area that is still sometimes a problem is the assessment of the Investigation section. Students usually show evidence of an interview and a questionnaire of some sort. The purpose of the investigation is to find out how to move the project forward, interviews that ask bland and simplistic questions fail to do this. Questionnaires again need to contain detail rather than be of a general nature. To demonstrate an effective use of investigative techniques the results of the investigation must be useful. There is a feel in some cases that the solution is decided so the research is almost irrelevant. The better students make the problem drive the solution and then use appropriate techniques to find useful information that progresses the development of a solution. If the students grasp this concept of the problem defining the solution rather than the other way round then they may gain the high marks throughout the development process.

Analysis and Deliverables
The quality of student work for row 1 was variable. Some students still submitted copy and pasted definitions of the DPA and Health and Safety legislation, which is not creditable unless it is specifically related to the problem being tackled. We have seen some students who only consider the constraints in this area and fail to define the scope. It is important that the scope should state what aspects the solution will cover, and also what aspects will not be covered.

For row 2 there are still some students who interpret deliverables as their A Level project report work rather than deliverables to the client.

Rows 3 and 4 were generally well assessed by centres, reflecting the ability of students.
In Row 5 most students attempted to produce a set of quantitative and qualitative evaluation criteria but often there was little evidence as to how these would provide an objective assessment of the solution. When looking at a final solution it is important to consider how well it works, how well it meets the needs of the client and also how useful it will be.

**Design and Planning for Implementation**
Row 1: To reiterate comments from previous years, alternative design solutions are not a comparison of application software implementation solutions. For example students who produce a comprehensive list of the advantages and disadvantages of using database software, spreadsheet software or an updated manual system will not gain any marks at all. There needs to be a detailed discussion as to how aspects of the solution could work. When students explore in depth what a client really needs then solutions become much more sophisticated and purposeful.

Rows 2 and 3 were generally well tackled although some students still focus on the planning of the production of the project report for their A level project, rather than planning what they need to do for the client. The plan should relate to the implementation, testing and installation of the solution.

Rows 4 and 5 were usually accurately assessed. However many students included generic theory notes about the types of testing but few actually demonstrated precisely what this meant for the system they were creating. Test strategies must be seen to prove the effectiveness of the implemented system. Test plans for data handling problems must include data if they are to be useful. It is also important to look at the fundamental key processes of the system. Only by outlining exactly what the solution is expected to do can evidence of testing the solution as a whole be obtained.

**Testing and Documentation of the solution**
As last year, the testing of the solution was tackled reasonably well, and accurately assessed. However in a substantial number of cases, students failed to realise that testing needs to cover the major process and then go on to cover the solution as a whole. Some students failed to demonstrate clearly what the key processes were or what the “solution as a whole” should include. Some students are still failing to test and reflect on the documentation they have produced and this can limit marks in rows 3, 4 and 5.

**Evaluation of the Implemented Solution**
On the whole students are produced better evaluations that are critical of the solution. For the student to show a critical evaluation there needs to be a reference to the testing of the solution. Some students included a reflection by the client and user on the solution and this is good to see as the solution should match the original needs stated in the earlier sections. Some students cross referenced requirements or evaluation criteria with a yes / no type response which is not critical and so did not generate marks.

**The Project Report**
On the whole students produced good documentation, making good use of word processing software. However on some occasions top marks were awarded where there were errors and omissions in the report such as page numbers, and consistent section headings.

**Mark Ranges and Award of Grades**
Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results Statistics](https://www.aqa.org.uk/results-statistics) page of the AQA Website.