**General Comments**
Centres are advised to read this report in conjunction with the published mark scheme and the section in the Specification where the performance of candidates at grades A and E is described.

The examination consisted of two parts: Section A - structured questions based on pre-release material; and Section B - questions requiring extended answers. Centres are reminded that all students should be familiar with the pre-release material supplied to them prior to the examination.

The pre-release had been understood by most candidates, many of whom were able to produce good quality answers to the questions in section A.

**Question 1a**
This question required candidates to explain how a hot restart facility is used should a disaster occur. Around two thirds of the candidates achieved 2 marks or 3 marks, demonstrating appropriate knowledge.

**Question 1b**
This question required candidates to describe other disaster recovery options. Whilst around half of the candidates achieved 5 marks or above, some confined their answers to describing the hot restart option (Q1a) or describing processes associated with disaster planning, rather than recovery options.

**Question 2**
Candidates were required to explain the differences between the Data Protection Act 1998 and the General Data Protection Regulations 2018. Some candidates were well prepared for this question and provided excellent answers, demonstrating an in-depth knowledge and understanding; they achieved full marks for their efforts. In some instances the answers better described the differences than did recent newspaper articles prepared by professional journalists. Around a quarter of candidates achieved 12 marks or more.

**Question 3**
The majority of candidates had a good understanding of blockchain technology, with 60% achieving 3 marks or more.

**Question 4**
Although the Systems Development Life Cycle (SDLC) is core to the development of systems, only around half the candidates achieved marks in the high mark range. Many omitted key stages, such as the construction stage, or showed a limited understanding of the order in which the stages are completed. Some confused SDLC with the Technology Life Cycle.

**Question 5a**
Candidates were required to identify two of the three general maintenance categories from a supplied list. This question was answered reasonably well, with only 14% failing to gain any marks.

**Question 5b**
This question required candidates to discuss the similarities and differences between systems maintenance and user support, areas in which past candidates have experienced difficulties. Whilst user support was generally well understood, candidates struggled with systems maintenance. Few gained marks in the high mark range.
Question 6
Candidates were required to describe the factors that influence an ICT strategy. Over a quarter of all candidates gained full marks.

Question 7a
This was a straightforward question and almost half of all candidates gained full marks. Many candidates spent time by providing an explanation of the data items, when the question only required a list.

Question 7b
For this question, greater understanding was required of the systems involved in the ordering process, and this differentiated the candidates. Some (3%) did not attempt the question, whilst others (18%) achieved maximum marks.

Question 8
Candidates were required to discuss the extent of their agreement or disagreement with a statement about the growth and complexity of ICT systems compared with the development of security systems and procedures. Although there were a few excellent answers, in general the essays were too brief and with limited content. Although the question required examples, these were often missing or were too generalised. Marks were mostly confined to the mid to good mark range. The quality of written communication and essay writing by some candidates was reasonable. However, handwriting has further deteriorated and future candidates should be encouraged to practise their handwriting skills and to learn how and when to use paragraphs.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades
Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the Results Statistics page of the AQA Website.

Converting Marks into UMS marks
Convert raw marks into Uniform Mark Scale (UMS) marks by using the link below.

UMS conversion calculator