

ICT STARTERS (INITIAL STEPS, NEXT STEPS AND ON TRACK LEVELS)

Paper 8984/4269-4274

ICT Starter

General

This year has witnessed the continued popularity of the syllabus among experienced ICT Starters Centres as well as a number of new Centres making entries for the first time. The vast majority of Centres are using Cambridge assessment papers and are achieving good results, with few mark changes at the moderation stage. Most submissions come in the summer months – June to September – with the February session being quite busy as well.

One of the biggest marking errors occurs where Centres overlook the fact that candidates have to achieve **all** Pass learning objectives to gain a Pass and **all** Pass and Merit learning objectives to gain a Merit. The most common example of this marking error happens where candidates have achieved all the learning objectives for a particular module, apart from one of the Pass learning objectives. As candidates have done most of the assessment tasks correctly, they are awarded a Pass, when this should be a Fail. Centres are advised to consult the syllabus document carefully.

A few Centres make administration errors by not recording the same mark on the entry form as on the candidate's work itself. More vigilant checking by Centres before submitting work can avoid the delay in results while these matters are clarified.

A small number of Centres this year have not sent the correct size sample of candidates' work. This leads to additional requests for information/further samples and can delay results. In particular, newer Centres should always ensure that they have included all the required evidence and, if they are unsure about anything they might need to include, they should ask via the ICT Starters discussion forum on the Teacher Support Site. **Sample sizes are detailed on the last page of the syllabus document.**

Centres on the whole continue to enter candidates for the Stage 1 certificate first before the full certificate, with most entries being made in two separate stages. Initial Steps and Next Steps Stage 1 are still the most popular modules of the syllabus.

Preparing candidate work for submission to Cambridge

Centres need to ensure that it is obvious to the Moderator why particular marks have been awarded.

- The **assessment tests and teacher's 'answer copy'** should always be included with the candidates' work.
- It is **often helpful to include a note of explanation** with candidate submissions to ease the moderation process and ensure that the Moderator does not miss elements of the candidate's work. This is also an extremely useful way to explain why a Pass or Merit has been awarded if it is not immediately obvious.

Electronic submission of work

More Centres are now submitting work electronically on CD-ROM but **all electronic files must be in pdf or jpeg format**. This means that word processed documents, spreadsheets etc. need to be scanned electronically before submission. Other files will not be opened and cannot be considered for moderation (with the exception of a generic video file for the Video for a Purpose module). This avoids any changes in formatting etc. caused by different versions of software and, indeed, the Moderator may not always have access to particular software which Centres have used in the assessment tests.

Particular care should be taken to ensure that files are clearly labelled if submitting work electronically. **There should be a separate folder for each candidate in the sample and additional folders within each candidate folder for each module.** Additional thought should be given to the filenames that candidates are asked to give to saved documents in their assessment tests..

Some Centres have submitted work partly in electronic form and partly in hard copy. This can sometimes make it hard to locate the evidence for particular candidates and Centres are advised to send work **either in hard copy or electronically, but not a mixture of both.**

Designing assessment tests

Centres should continue to ensure that assessment tests give candidates the opportunity to produce evidence of their having achieved all Learning Objectives as stated in the syllabus. In some cases, teacher evidence is allowed. A note to this effect should accompany the work, initialled by the teacher. Where possible, tests should be authentic, giving candidates a 'real' experience of using ICT for a specific purpose.

For Centre-designed assessment tests, it is helpful to show which learning objective each question is intended to assess.

Care must be taken not to prompt candidates too much. They should be asked to carry out a task, broken down into individual steps, but not told what icons to click or what to select from the toolbar menus. A small minority of Centres try to design assessments with a numerical marking system. This is not helpful when the final marks awarded to candidates will be Pass or Merit.

However, it is noticeable that candidates perform better and there are fewer mark changes when Centres have used the Cambridge assessment papers. Using these ensures that candidates will be assessed in all learning objectives. The most recent papers are always available from the CIE Direct website.

It is permissible to make changes to the Cambridge papers to comply with local settings, lesson content etc., but great care must be taken to ensure they still test all the learning objectives.

Module specific advice

Starting with Text

It is not particularly good practice to get candidates to enter a lot of text with errors. Text which requires corrections can be given to them, though they should also be entering some text themselves. Also, the text must be completely error free to award Merit.

Starting Images

Candidates should be able to amend their original picture by selecting a particular object and either deleting it entirely (restoring the background) or copying and pasting it elsewhere in the picture.

Starting Graphs

Candidates should be given some data to classify, rather than just amending an existing spreadsheet. In addition to answering questions about the graphs, candidates should be asked to make their own observations, unprompted by a particular question.

Starting Control

Candidates should supply the instructions given and the path of the turtle.

Starting Searches

Candidates need to be required to make explicit the keywords they use for searching.

Exploring Images

The assessment of LO3 should require the candidates to select part of an object on a given image, then copy and resize it.

Exploring Control

Candidates should supply the instructions given and the design created.

Exploring the Internet

There should be evidence of candidates having saved, printed **and** bookmarked a web page for LO3.

Exploring Email

There should be a screenshot of names added to an address book for LO2 and Centres should note that there is a difference between a mail group and an address book. There should also be evidence that candidates have both **viewed** an attachment and sent an attachment for LO4 and LO5. Finally, evidence should be supplied to show that candidates can manage email folders for LO6. This could be a screenshot of a new folder created and some emails added to it.

Exploring Multimedia/Documents for a Purpose/Multimedia for a Purpose/Video/Animation for a Purpose

A weak area with many candidates is describing how their work addresses a particular audience. Centres should try to encourage candidates to think more carefully about the audience for their work throughout their course and help them to develop ways to explain more clearly how their choices in colour, text, font, layout etc. impacts on or appeals to that audience. This is not easy for young candidates, so they need plenty of practice in class at it. Care should also be taken that documents produced are 'authentic' and fit for purpose, without too much text on each page/slide.

Care must be taken to differentiate candidates between Merit and Pass in this area.

Spreadsheets for a Purpose

Candidates must design a spreadsheet from a brief given, not simply be given a spreadsheet model to work with.

Control for a Purpose

Centres must supply evidence of candidates having used Control software or devices. Flowcharts show evidence for LO1 only and this is not sufficient. Candidates should be given practice at evaluating and improving their control system, realising its limitation compared with a real system.

Website Design for a Purpose

For LO5, two specific elements on the page should be given for which candidates have to identify the HTML code.

Networks for a Purpose

Network diagrams should be labelled clearly, stating the purpose of each element.

Video/animation for a purpose

For video, storyboarding and filming can be done outside of the allotted assessment time, but the storyboard must still be included. Centres must supply a video file of the final video produced (or screen shots of the animated gif for animation), along with the candidates' storyboards. Also, there must be evidence of the music or narration which was used for the video or animation. Ideally, evidence for this module should be submitted as an electronic file.