O Level Computer Studies (7010)

Is O Level Computer Studies available to private candidates?

From 2011 it is available to private candidates if they enter for Paper 3 rather than Paper 2 (Option C).

Why do you not allow private candidates to do the coursework?

The main reason is that the Centre (through which candidates enter the examination) has to be able to guarantee that the coursework is the candidate's own work. If the Centre has not taught a candidate and has not seen his/her work being developed at first hand, it can't make that guarantee.

Can Student A be entered as a school candidate rather than as a private candidate?

It depends entirely on who taught him and in what capacity. To be a school candidate, Student A must have been enrolled as a student at the Centre AND must have been taught Computer Studies at the Centre, by a teacher employed by the Centre to teach him. If any of these criteria are not met, then Student A is a private candidate.

Student B entered as a school candidate a year ago. Now she wants to resit as a private candidate. Can she carry her coursework mark forward from last year's session?

Yes, she should enter for Option B.

Student C has paid a private tutor to teach her, and the tutor can verify that her project is her own work. Can she enter?

Sorry, but this is not good enough. There are people who, if paid, will verify any piece of work, and if we accepted their word then our qualifications would fall into disrepute.

Is there an option available which doesn't include the coursework component?

Yes. Computer Studies offers Paper 3 as an alternative to coursework from 2011.

Student D is a private candidate and doesn't have a coursework mark to carry forward. Is there any way he can enter?

Yes. Computer Studies offers Paper 3 as an alternative to coursework from 2011.

Which is the correct textbook for the course?

We don't require Centres to use any one particular textbook for our courses, and we would hope that wherever possible teachers would make use of a variety of different resources, drawing from the best bits of each. We do provide a list of booksand other online resources which we believe teachers may find helpful.

Do I need to teach the course in the order given in the syllabus?

No, and we don't recommend it. The syllabus outlines what may be assessed in the examination, but we would normally expect teachers to follow their own scheme of work based on the syllabus.

I want to use last year's papers with my students. What were the pass marks for each grade?

The grade boundaries change slightly from year to year to allow for any small variations in the difficulties of the papers. The boundaries should normally be in the ranges given below:

A*/1   75 – 85%
A/2   65 – 75%
B/3   60 – 65%

B/4   50 – 55%
C/5   40 – 45%
C/6   30 – 35%
D/7   25 – 30%
E/8   15 – 25%

What software and hardware do we have to use?

We don't specify – you may use the software and hardware which in your opinion best suits the way you want to teach the course, and which is best suited to local requirements (such as availability, price, compatibility with other systems, service provision etc).

The coursework marking criteria in the syllabus don't really apply to my students' projects. Can I adapt them?

No. A few years ago we did allow this, but we quickly learned that it was almost impossible to guarantee that the same standards were being applied everywhere. For the sake of fairness to all our candidates, we now insist that all coursework is marked according to the same coursework criteria. It is up to teachers to ensure that candidates choose projects which show what they can do against the published marking criteria.

Do I need to get approval from Cambridge for my students' proposed projects?

No. Teachers working with the candidates are in a much better position than we are to judge how much scope is allowed for the students to show what they are capable of.

One of my students wants to do a project on website design. Is this acceptable?

Yes, that is (in principle) fine. Some good projects have been done with website design, but others have been poor choices. You need to make a judgement about how the proposed project will enable the student to meet the marking criteria.

When is the scenario for Paper 3 released to Centres?

The scenario is to be released to Centres on 1 March 2011 for the June 2011 examination and on 1 September 2011 for the November 2011 examination.

Which project type is more acceptable for Computer Studies?

Projects should be of a type that allows the students to address the marks available. For example, some systems are difficult to test. Students should be interested in the topic, for example to have a personal interest such as a hobby, a family business. The ability of the student should also be considered.

Should a project only be developed in MS Access?

No. MS Access lends itself well to data processing and addresses all the criteria in the mark scheme. However, spreadsheets and websites are some of the other possibilities. Note that websites need to have some user interaction. For example a simple project might include hyperlinks; better projects link to a spreadsheet or a database or perform data handling programmed in, for example, php.

Does the Centre need to do internal moderation of coursework when there is only one teacher?

No, the purpose of internal moderation is that the teachers at the Centre have marked the coursework to the same standard. It is important that students' work is in the correct rank order, i.e. the best work has the highest mark, the weakest work has the lowest mark, etc.

What happens if the projects from different students are very similar?

The teacher should actively monitor and ensure that students work independently.

For coursework how do we allocate marks for marking criterion number 13 (Implementation – Programming code)?

1 mark for a system macro or some library code used
2 marks for student writing their own code for a macro or procedure/function, for example for making a graph when clicking on a cell.
3 marks for the very best candidates who have programmed lots of code for example in VBA. This will be very rarely awarded.