10 exam tips for ICT

Share these tips with your learners to set them up for success in their ICT exam.

Organising files: Candidates are expected to show the ability to organise their work into folders with suitable folder names. Some assessments may make specific demands for folders, and others will not, but candidates should have an understanding of how to organise their work.

Finding information: Make sure that internet searches are efficient. Searches should make use of a range of key words in the search box to reduce the number of irrelevant results. Candidates should save evidence of the search terms used.

Email: Make sure that emails are composed correctly, including a correct email address, and a relevant subject line. Although allowances are generally made for small errors in emails, candidates should check their work before sending.

Documents, posters, flyers etc: Candidates should show the examiner what they are capable of. Given a page of basic text and images, the candidate can use a range of ICT tools to develop the document, such as text formatting, columns, tables, text and page borders, and text boxes.

Images: These are often in the wrong size and in the wrong place. Candidates should be well-practised in inserting, resizing and positioning images, using a range of formatting tools in common applications. They must also show some design skills to ensure images are effective.

Numbers and calculations: The obvious choice for such work is a spreadsheet. Candidates should be familiar with the use of formulae and cell references. Candidates often put 'SUM' at the start of any formula, but depending on the level, they should understand the different formulae for calculating additions, multiplications, divisions, maximum/minimum, averages and percentages.

Charts and graphs: Many candidates are not fluent in the use of axes titles or data labels. The result is charts that only give part of the required information. Particularly at Level 2, candidates may also need to select data that is not in adjacent rows or columns.

Databases: The principles of a database are expected to be understood – for example the basic structure of a database and the facilities for producing queries and reports. Some database-style features can be completed in a spreadsheet, e.g. filters and sorting, and candidates should be familiar with these, as well as the nature and purpose of large databases.

Security and safety: Candidates need to have a broad knowledge of issues regarding personal safety online and the protection of data from risks presented by viruses, etc. Wider reading or the use of quiz-type material in lessons would benefit candidates.

Practice: The most reliable preparation is practice, with exposure to a range of information search requests, document styles and spreadsheet problem-solving scenarios. Make sure that candidates have taken practice assessments. When using the online assessment, the use of a sample online test is particularly important to ensure that candidates are prepared.