

IGCSE Computer Studies (0420)

Is IGCSE Computer Studies available to private candidates?

No, it is not available to private candidates, because the coursework component is not available to private candidates.

Why do you not allow private candidates do the coursework?

The main reason is that the Centre (through whom 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 the quality of his/her work 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. This is the only option available to private candidates.

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?

No. Computer Studies is a practical subject at heart, and an option without the practical component would not provide a balanced assessment of the subject.

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

Sorry, but no. Even if he has been studying the course for two years, we will not accept his entry. This is made clear in the syllabus and in the syllabus synopsis.

Do I need any special training or permission to supervise or mark the coursework? What do I need to do?

You – or another teacher in the Computer Studies Department – need to be trained to mark and internally moderate the coursework. The usual way to do this is by completing a Distance Training Pack, which we will send you for £40. Then you need to have your work on this pack assessed, which we will do for a further £20. In the first instance, you need to contact James Thomson in CIE, who administers the distance training.

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 books which we believe teachers may find helpful, and you can find this on our website.

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*	75 – 85%
A	65 – 75%
B	60 – 65%
C	50 – 55%
D	40 – 45%
E	30 – 35%
F	25 – 30%
G	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.