

NorthStarUK IGCSE ICT
Advice to parents and candidates

From September 2008 NorthStarUK is proposing to offer the following subject (for certification in 2009 onwards):

Cambridge International Examinations
International GCSE 0417 Information and Communication Technology

This is (usually) a 2-year course leading to the award of an IGCSE qualification. The assessment structure for this specification does **not** have a coursework component. It has 3 examination papers:

Paper 1 – A 2-hour written paper assessing skills relevant to ‘Knowledge and Understanding’ (of ICT). It will be worth 40% of the overall mark. The paper will contain mainly questions requiring a short response, a word, a phrase or one or two sentences, although there will be some questions requiring a more extended response. There will be no choice of questions. The questions will test the following sections:

Components of a Computer System	Data Types
Input and Output Devices	The Effects of Using IT
Storage Devices and Media	The ways in which IT is used
Computer Networks	Systems Analysis and Design

This paper will be taken on a specified date and time at an approved CIE Examinations Centre.

Papers 2 and 3 – Two 2 hour 30 minute practical tests assessing the practical skills listed:

Communication	Output Data
Document Production	Data Analysis
Data Manipulation	Website Authoring
Integration (of software packages together)	Presentation Authoring

The two practical tests will each comprise a number of tasks to be taken under controlled conditions at an approved CIE Examinations Centre. The practical tests focus on the candidate’s ability to carry out practical tasks rather than to explain the theory of how the tasks are completed. The two practical tests are each worth 30% of the overall assessment (60% combined).

The dates of these practical tests should be as convenient to the centre within the overall timetable as specified by CIE, but usually within the month immediately prior to the written examination (Paper 1).

It is **very strongly recommended** that the Private Candidate should arrange several ‘practice’ sessions at the Examination Centre working through past Practical Test Examination Papers¹ using the hardware and software available at that centre.

¹ The NorthStarUK ICT Tutor will be available, by prior arrangement, to check these practice papers if required.

Any CIE recognised centre may accept Private Candidates for this specification.

- If the centre offers this specification to internal students it should be fairly straightforward for them to accept NSUK students as Private Candidates.
- If the centre does not offer this specification to internal students they may accept NSUK students as Private Candidates provided they have the appropriate hardware, software, supervision and security available.

Detailed procedures for conducting Practical Tests are set out in the CIE subject specification document and in the Handbook for Centres, but NSUK parents seeking a centre should be aware of the following points in their discussions with potential centres:

- **Hardware and Software**
Any hardware platform, operating system and applications packages can be used by candidates in the practical examinations, provided that they have the facilities to enable the candidates to fully demonstrate all the skills, performance criteria and assessment objects as set out in the subject specification.
- **The Supervisor**
A suitably competent Supervisor is responsible for the administration of the practical tests according to the procedures detailed in the subject specification and the Handbook for Centres. The Supervisor is also responsible for the preparation of the hardware and software.
- **Security Issues**
The Examination Centre will need to provide a secure network location for the candidates to be provided with files from CIE and on which they can store work during the assessment. They will need **access to the Internet** and will need an **email address** for use during the assessment.
- **Timetabling**
The IGCSE timetable will specify a period within which the two practical tests must be taken by candidates. Within this period, Centres may conduct the practical tests at any convenient time or times. The candidates are not all required to take the tests at the same time, and they do not need to be sequestered until other students have taken the tests.
- **Preparation**
Before the candidates take a practical test, the Supervisor **must** work through it using the hardware and software to be used by the candidates, in order to²:
 - Ensure that the hardware and software at the Centre will enable the candidates to meet **all** the performance criteria.
 - Produce the Supervisor's worked copy of the assessment, which must be included with the submission to CIE of candidate's work.

The major issue is going to be the **availability** of an **appropriate supervisor** who is familiar enough with the available **hardware** and **software** to be able to carry out the **preparation** and **invigilation** of the **practical tests**. So I would recommend that you approach **several centres** and **do not** enrol for this course until **at least one** has indicated a **clear willingness** to accept the NorthStarUK student as a **Private Candidate**.

² N.B. Due to the remote and asynchronous nature of NSUK on-line tutoring, the NSUK ICT tutor is available to advise on these issues, but will not be able to carry out this essential preparation work or supervise the practical tests except at any (future) NorthStarUK organised CIE centre.