

Your guide to the changes for 2021

Following [Ofqual's consultation](#) on arrangements for the assessment of VTQs in 2020/21, we've reviewed units in our Cambridge Nationals and Cambridge Technicals being taken this academic year to provide specific guidance at qualification and unit level on changes to requirements or alternative approaches to support public health guidance.

Our changes are designed to make units to be taken in 2020/21 possible to complete, given the constraints you are all working with, and to make sure that the learning outcomes and assessment criteria can still be met.

We understand that the current disruption continues to change and also varies across regions, so our guidance gives acceptable alternatives you can consider when delivering units in your school /college while following the public health guidance.

Please use the [specification and assignments](#) available on our website, alongside this document, to plan and carry out assessment in 2020-21.

General notes

Centres should consider selecting unit combinations which are easily accessible to all candidates with respect to hardware, software and resources. They should also think about the impact of social distancing/bubble groups,

These adaptations are intended for students in the **final year** of study. The adaptations should only be used if there is no alternative available for the candidate in order to complete the qualification.

Candidates in their first year of study should complete units where no adaptations are needed. The opportunity to complete other units in the appropriate format may then be possible later in the course if social distancing/bubble groups situation is removed restrictions are lifted.

Currently, practical skills work and access to equipment may be limited. Some online platforms allow virtualisation of practical aspects for units. However, these are a poor substitute for hands-on practical (i.e. developing an IT solution for a given assignment tasks for chosen units) experience with a real system.

Other units are difficult to replicate in a remote learning or restricted learning environment. Practical units can present problems because of social distancing. For example, cleaning equipment between sessions may be impossible given the sensitive nature of the components used.

Software related units may be equally challenging for any remote (or bubble groups) working as students. There may be limited time available to access the packages required. This could lead to less than effective implementation of the software solutions required for the unit assessments.

When considering software units, centres should consider software that is easily accessible to all candidates. This may be open source or free software that carries out similar functions to other software.

Suggested adaptations

Unit number(s) and title(s)	Learning objectives (LO)	Criteria	Issues identified in the unit(s)	Adaptations / solutions
<p>Unit 3 Computer systems</p>	<p>LO3 Be able to set up and maintain computer systems</p>	<p>P5 set up a standalone computer system, installing hardware and software components</p> <p>P6 configure a computer system to meet user needs</p>	<p>LO3 requires students to be able to set up and maintain computer systems.</p> <p>Centres offering this unit under current guidelines on social distancing/bubble groups, may find difficulties to provide appropriate hardware, software and networked system to all students to complete the LO's tasks.</p>	<p>P5: There are no adaptations possible for this criterion.</p> <p>Candidates are required to set up a standalone computer system. This requires a candidate to install hardware and software components. A minimum of two hardware and two software components are required.</p> <p>P6: Candidates could provide a detailed explanation of the configurations and processes they would undertake to configure a computer system for a user's needs.</p> <p>This could be evidenced as either:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a technical guide for technicians • an audio recording of a discussion <p>All audio recordings must be clear. Candidates must introduce themselves and state the context of the end user needs. Candidates should use the following format for the recording:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe each configuration they would make and justify why the configuration is appropriate • Provide a detailed explanation of the process they would follow for each configuration (the explanations must be in the same order as they would be carried out by the candidate)

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		<p>D2 recommend computer system improvements based on feedback from users</p> <p>P7 test a configured computer system for functionality</p> <p>M3 analyse the test results identifying any discrepancies</p>		<p>D2: Candidates could be provided with the feedback from users of a computer system. They should analyse the feedback. They can then make recommendations on how the computer system could be improved to address the feedback provided. Candidates should justify the recommendations they make. The evidence could be in the form of a report or a recorded discussion based on the outlined guidance above.</p> <p>P7: Candidates could prepare a test plan. The test plan will identify suitable tests and the expected results. The plan will test the configured computer system (based on the configurations they evidenced for P6). The test plans should include an explanation of how they would carry out each test.</p> <p>M3: Assessors may provide test results on a candidates' test plan. The assessor should include two (or more) results which shows a discrepancy.</p> <p>The assessors should provide different issues for each candidate. This will help mitigate the risk of malpractice.</p> <p>Candidates can then analyse the test results, identify discrepancies, and explain how they would address the issues. They would then re-test the system.</p> <p>Candidates should provide evidence of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A completed test plans • Identification of the discrepancies. An explanation of how they would rectify the problems. <p>Candidates would need to include a re-test of each configuration where there was an issue.</p>

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		<p>P8 undertake routine maintenance tasks on a standalone computer system</p>		<p>P8: Candidates could create a plan for any maintenance tasks that they would carry. They should give a detailed explanation of the processes they would follow to carry out the tasks. This could be a report (with the completed maintenance plan) or a discussion of the maintenance plan.</p> <p>The discussions should take the same format and considerations as indicated for P6.</p>
<p>Unit 4 Managing networks</p>	<p>LO3 Be able to carry out network management activities</p>	<p>P5 interrogate a network to identify the network assets and their configuration</p> <p>D1 analyse the interrogated network performance including any identified problems and faults</p> <p>P6 undertake routine network management tasks</p> <p>M2 complete a work log to manage activities on a network</p> <p>D2 explain the steps that organisations should take to maintain network security</p>	<p>LO3 requires students to be able to carry out network management activities.</p> <p>Centres offering this unit under current guidelines on social distancing/bubble groups, may find difficulties to provide appropriate hardware, software and networked system to all students to complete the LO's tasks</p>	<p>P5: Can only be adapted if the centre can provide a virtual network which allows the candidates to identify the network assets and configuration. No other form of adaptation is feasible.</p> <p>D1: Candidates could be provided with the results from series of network tests with respect to its performance and problems and faults.</p> <p>Candidates could then analyse the results and present their conclusions from the tests. This could be as a written report or a discussion following the guidelines for discussions previously provided for Unit 3.</p> <p>P6: There are no adaptations to this criterion as the candidates must carry out several network management tasks. These cannot be simulated or based on pure discussions.</p> <p>M2: Candidates could complete a work log based on management activities that they believe appropriate for the identified network system.</p>

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<p>Unit 8 IT technical support</p>	<p>LO3 Be able to gather information to provide advice and guidance</p>	<p>P3 identify the types of fault that can occur</p> <p>P4 source technical information to provide advice and guidance for a variety of faults</p>	<p>LO3 requires students to be able to gather information to provide advice and guidance.</p> <p>Centres offering this unit under current guidelines on social distancing/bubble groups, may find difficulties to provide appropriate hardware, software and IT tools to all students to complete the LO's tasks.</p>	<p>P3/P4: The following adaptation could be implemented.</p> <p>Candidates could be provided with a context or multiple contexts. The could be given a range of different issues that has occurred on one or more computer systems.</p> <p>The candidate would identify any issues and source technical information about each fault. Candidates could source information from different sources, for example the Internet or technical guides.</p> <p>Candidates can then provide appropriate advice and guidance based on their research about each fault.</p> <p>The evidence must include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • what the fault is • the potential cause of the fault • the sources used to research the technical information for each fault • the conclusions drawn from the research e.g. what has caused the fault and how it can be rectified • the advice and guidance they would provide for each of the faults. <p>The evidence could take the form of a report or a discussion based on the guidance provided for Unit 3.</p>

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				<p>P6: Candidates are required to improve the system by upgrading hardware and software. This is the system they would monitor for P5.</p> <p>Candidates could provide the following evidence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • list the hardware and software they would use to upgrade the computer system • Justify the hardware and software selected • provide a detailed explanation of the process they would follow for each of the upgrades. • The order in which they would carry out the upgrades. <p>The evidence could be a report, technical guide or a discussion (based on the guidance provided for Unit 3).</p> <p>M3: Candidates could provide a test plan. The test plan will identify the tests they would carry out for each upgrade and the expected results.</p> <p>Assessors could select one or two of the tests and provide results, which show that there is an issue. Candidates should then consider the issues and provide:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • an explanation as to why these issues occurred • how they would rectify them and re-test. <p>Candidates should provide evidence of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the completed test plan • the written explanation of how the issues would be resolved • the re-tests they would conduct.

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				<p>D2: Candidates could provide a detailed explanation of the improvements and restrictions to the computer system after the upgrades have taken place. They would compare this to the original system, prior to the upgrades.</p> <p>The evidence could be in the form of a report, technical guide or discussion (based on the guidance provided in Unit 3).</p>
<p>Unit 13 Installing and upgrading software</p>	<p>LO3 Be able to install or upgrade software</p>	<p>P4 record and complete a software installation</p> <p>M3 demonstrate how software has been customised to suit the user need</p> <p>D2 justify choices for customisation of identified software for a user</p> <p>P5 record and complete a software upgrade</p> <p>M4 test software upgrade for functionality</p>	<p>LO3 requires students to be able to install or upgrade software.</p> <p>If centres are offering this unit then with current guidelines on social distancing/bubble groups, it may be difficult for some centres to provide appropriate hardware and software to all students to complete the LO's tasks.</p>	<p>There is no adaptation available for this learning outcome.</p> <p>Candidates must record and complete the software installation. For M3 they are also required to demonstrate how the software has been customised to suit the user's needs.</p> <p>The criterion for demonstration precludes this learning outcome from being achieved.</p> <p>Candidates could achieve P4, if they provided the following through a report, technical guide or discussion (based on the guidance for Unit 3):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a description of the software to be installed (this could be based on their installation plan from LO2) • a detailed explanation of the processes they followed to complete the installation • the precautions they took during the installation <p>P5: could be evidence in a similar way as P4.</p> <p>As M3 cannot be achieved through adaptation, candidates would not be able to achieve the merit or distinction grades.</p> <p>A pass grade achievement is still possible if the adaptation was implemented.</p>

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<p>Unit 15 Computer game platforms and technologies</p>	<p>LO4 Be able to connect and configure platforms and devices to enable gameplay</p>	<p>P4 apply techniques to connect and configure platforms and devices with some assistance</p>	<p>LO4 requires students to be able to connect and configure platforms and devices to enable gameplay.</p> <p>If centres are offering this unit then with current guidelines on social distancing/bubble groups, it may be difficult for some centres to provide appropriate hardware and software to all students to complete the LO's tasks.</p>	<p>There is no adaptation possible for this criterion.</p> <p>This is because of the range of platforms and devices that the candidates are required to connect to and configure.</p> <p>The only form of evidence must be via performance evidence.</p>
<p>Unit 22 IT systems troubleshooting and repair</p>	<p>LO1 Understand how organisational policies can affect IT troubleshooting and repair</p> <p>LO2 Be able to use appropriate tools to troubleshoot IT problems</p> <p>LO3 Be able to select and apply fault remedies to IT systems</p>	<p>P2 use hardware and software tools to troubleshoot simple IT problems</p> <p>P3 Identify sources and select suitable fault remedies</p> <p>M1 troubleshoot complex system problems</p> <p>P4 apply fault remedies safely to simple IT system problems</p> <p>M2 apply fault remedies safely to complex IT system problems</p> <p>P5 demonstrate good working practices when applying fault remedies</p>	<p>LO1 P2 grading criteria requires students to use hardware and software tools to troubleshoot simple IT problems.</p> <p>LO2 requires students to be able to use appropriate tools to troubleshoot IT problems;</p> <p>LO3 requires students to be able to select and apply fault remedies to IT systems.</p> <p>Centres offering this unit, under current guidelines on social distancing/bubble groups, may find difficulties to provide appropriate hardware and software to all students to complete the LO's tasks.</p>	<p>This is a very practical unit. Therefore, no adaptation is available.</p> <p>Evidence for all aspects of this unit can only be effective through creating performance evidence.</p>

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Unit 28 Networked systems security	LO4 Be able to apply system security	P5 configure a networked device or specialist software to improve the security of the network.	LO4 requires students to be 'able to apply system security'. Centres offering this unit under current guidelines on social distancing/bubble groups, may find difficulties to provide appropriate hardware, software and networked system to all students to complete the LO's tasks.	Centres are allowed to use virtual networks/ platforms. These resources must allow candidates to configure networked devices/specialist software. It must allow candidates to improve security. Any improvement(s) must be based on the planned procedures for P4 and allow implementation of the tests identified in D2. No other adaptation is possible for this performance criterion.

Support

OCR's team of expert Subject Advisors has created videos, webinars, and other resources to guide you through these changes and help you prepare your students for their exams in summer 2021.

These resources can be found on [the qualification page on our website](#).

Contact us

If you would like to contact us, you can do so at:

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