Qualification awaiting accreditation

CAMBRIDGE OCR

Specification

Cambridge OCR Level 3 V Level in

Digital Systems and Data

Code H101

Version 0.1| November 2026

ocr.org.uk/V Levels

Are you using the latest version of this specification?

The latest version of our specifications will always be on our website and may differ from printed versions. We will inform you about changes to specifications.

This qualification is in draft form and has not yet been accredited by Ofqual, the regulator. It is published to enable you to have an early sight of our proposed approach to this qualification. Further changes may be required, and no assurance can be given at this time that the proposed qualification will be made available in its current form, or that it will be accredited in time for first teaching in September 2027.

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Specification updates

Key changes have been listed below:

Section	Change	Version	Date
All	Draft specification	Version 0.1	November 2026

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1 Qualification at a glance

1.1 Cambridge OCR Level 3 V Level in Digital Systems and Data overview

Qualification detail	Qualification information
Qualification number	TBC
First entry date	1 September 2027
Guided learning hours (GLH)	360
Total qualification time (TQT)	450
Certification entry code	H101
Approved age range	16-18, 18+, 19+
Offered in	England only
Performance table information	This qualification is designed to meet the Department for Education's requirements for qualifications in the V Levels category of the 16-19 performance tables.
Eligibility for funding	This qualification meets funding approval criteria.
UCAS points	This qualification is recognised in the UCAS tariff tables. You'll find more information on the UCAS website.
This qualification is suitable for students who:	are age 16 to 19 and on a full-time study programme. want to develop applied knowledge and skills in digital systems and data. want to progress onto other related study, such as higher education courses in digital systems and data.
Entry requirements	There is no requirement for students to achieve any specific qualifications before taking this qualification.
Qualification requirements	Students must complete four mandatory units and one optional unit chosen from two options.

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Qualification detail	Qualification information
Assessment method/model	Units F015 and F016 are assessed by an exam and marked by us. You will assess the NEA units F017 to F020, and we will moderate them. We provide set assignments which must be used to assess the NEA units. The dates for which they are live are shown on the front cover.
Assessment series each year	June
Terminal assessment	The exams must be taken in the final assessment series before qualification certification. If a student retakes their qualification, they will need to resit the exams in order to meet the terminal rule again.
Exam resits	Students can resit the exams. The terminal assessment rule means that the resit result will be used towards the student's final qualification grade and not the best result.
Repeat submission of students' NEA work	Students can improve their work and submit it to you again for assessment. They must have your agreement and you must be sure it is in the student's best interests. We use the term 'resubmission' when referring to student work that has previously been submitted to us for moderation. For information about resubmission see section 5.4.5 and for feedback see section 5.3.
Grading	V Level qualifications are graded on the scale: A*, A, B, C, D, E and P where A* is the highest. Students who do not reach the minimum standard of P (Pass) will be Unclassified (U). Information about calculating the qualification grades is in Section 4.4

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1.2 Qualification size

The size of each qualification is described in terms of guided learning hours (GLH) and total qualification time (TQT).

GLH indicates the approximate time (in hours) you will spend supervising or directing study and assessment activities. We have worked with people who are experienced in delivering related qualifications to determine the content that needs to be taught and how long it will take to deliver.

TQT includes two parts:

- GLH
- an estimate of the number of hours a student will spend on unsupervised learning or assessment activities (including homework) to successfully complete their qualification.

The Cambridge OCR Level 3 V Level in Digital Systems and Data is 360 GLH and 450 TQT.

1.3 Availability and language

Our V Levels are available in England only. They are **not** available in Wales or Northern Ireland.

The qualifications and their assessment materials are available in English only. We will only assess answers written in English.

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1.4 Qualification structure

Key to units for these qualifications:

Key term	Definition
Exam	We set and mark the exams for these units.
Non-exam assessment	We set the assignment for these units. You assess the assignment and we moderate the assessment.
Mandatory	Students must complete these units.
Optional	Students must complete some of these units.
Guided learning hours	The approximate time (in hours) the teacher will spend supervising or directing study and assessment activities.

Cambridge OCR Level 3 V Level in Digital Systems and Data

For this qualification, students must complete five units:

- Two mandatory exam units
- Two mandatory non-exam assessment units
- One optional non-exam assessment unit

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Unit number	Unit title	Unit reference number (URN)	Guided learning hours (GLH)	Assessment method	Mandatory or optional
F015	Digital systems and security	Y/652/4423	75	Exam	Mandatory
F016	Digital solution design and communication	A/652/4424	75	Exam	Mandatory
F017	Application of data analytics	D/652/4425	70	Non-exam assessment	Mandatory
F018	Application of cyber security	F/652/4426	70	Non-exam assessment	Mandatory
F019	Implementing digital systems	H/625/4427	70	Non-exam assessment	Optional
F020	Developing digital solutions	J/652/4428	70	Non-exam assessment	Optional

1.5 Assessment availability

The exam units must be taken as terminal assessment. This means that the exams for units F015 and F016 must be taken in the student's final assessment series. The first exam series for this qualification is June 2029.

All students must take the exams at a set time on the same day in a series.

Non-exam assessment (NEA) assignments can be taken by students at any time during the live period shown on the front cover.

There is one assessment series each year to submit NEA. The first assessment series for NEA units is June 2028. More information is in Section 6.1.1

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1.6 Purpose statement

Cambridge OCR Level 3 V Level in Digital Systems and Data

Qualification number: TBC

Overview

Who this qualification is for

The Cambridge OCR Level 3 V Level in Digital Systems and Data is for students aged 16-19 years old. It will develop knowledge, understanding and skills that will help prepare you for progression to undergraduate study and are relevant to digital systems and data.

You might be interested in this qualification if you want a small qualification that builds applied or practical skills, to take alongside and enhance your A Levels or other Level 3 qualifications. You will have the opportunity to apply what you learn to practical, real-life contexts, such as:

- preparing, analysing and presenting data to support conclusions and decision making.
- applying cyber security practices to identify potential risks and protect digital systems.
- configuring digital systems or designing digital solutions to meet user needs and organisational requirements.

The qualification will also help you develop independence and confidence in using skills that are relevant to the sector and that prepare you for progressing to university courses where independent study skills are needed. You will develop the following transferable skills that can be used in both higher education and other life and work situations:

- analysing: interpreting information, identifying patterns, trends and relationships, and evaluating evidence to support conclusions and recommendations.
- decision-making: considering options and requirements to select appropriate approaches and justify decisions.
- communication: sharing information, ideas, requirements and solutions clearly and effectively with different audiences.
- planning: organising tasks, resources and activities to ensure objectives and outcomes can be achieved effectively.
- investigative skills: identifying issues, examining evidence and determining possible causes to support problem solving and improvement.
- digital responsibility: considering ethical, legal, cyber security and sustainability requirements when using and developing digital technologies and digital solutions.

This qualification will complement other learning that you're completing at Key Stage 5. If you are a full-time student, it will be part of your studies along with A Levels and/or other Level 3 qualifications.

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What you will study when you take this qualification

Through a combination of theoretical study and hands-on experience, you will develop the necessary knowledge and skills that can support progression to higher education study in digital systems and data.

In the examined units, you will study key knowledge and understanding relevant to digital systems and data. In the non-exam assessment (NEA) units, you will demonstrate knowledge and skills you learn by completing a practical assignment. More information about the knowledge and skills you will develop is below.

The qualification has four mandatory units and two optional units.

These are the **mandatory** units – you must take **all** these units:

- F015: Digital systems and security

  This unit is assessed by an exam.

  In this unit you will learn about the components, operation, configuration, support and management of digital systems, and the factors that influence their performance, reliability and security. Topics include:

  - Topic A Digital systems and infrastructure.
  - Topic B Security risks, threats and vulnerabilities.
  - Topic C Digital system testing.
  - Topic D Safe and secure operational practices.
- F016: Digital solution design and communication

  This unit is assessed by an exam.

  In this unit you will learn about the principles, approaches and processes used to design and develop digital solutions, together with automated and AI-enabled systems and responsible digital practice. Topics include:

  - Topic A Structured approaches to digital solution design.
  - Topic B Planning digital solution designs.
  - Topic C Automated systems and Artificial Intelligence (AI).
  - Topic D Information communication.
  - Topic E Ethical, legal and sustainability considerations.

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- F017: Application of data analytics

  This unit is assessed by an assignment.

  - In this unit you will learn about the preparation, analysis, interpretation and presentation of data to generate insights that support organisational decision making. Topics include:
    - Topic A Analyse data requirements.
    - Topic B Prepare and analyse data.
    - Topic C Interpret results and draw conclusions.
    - Topic D Communicate findings.
- F018: Application of cyber security

  This unit is assessed by an assignment.

  In this unit you will learn about the security controls used to protect digital systems and services, how cyber security concerns are identified and assessed, and the actions taken to respond to potential incidents. Topics include:

  - Topic A Identify cyber security concerns.
  - Topic B Interpret cyber security information.
  - Topic C Recommend security improvements.

These are **optional** units – you must take **one** of these units:

- F019: Implementing digital systems

  This unit is assessed by an assignment.

  In this unit you will learn about the preparation, configuration, testing and evaluation of digital systems, including secure and responsible configuration practices. Topics include:

  - Topic A Plan digital systems.
  - Topic B Prepare and configure digital systems.
  - Topic C Test and maintain digital systems.
- F020: Developing digital solutions

  This unit is assessed by an assignment.

  In this unit you will learn about the principles, approaches and techniques used to analyse, design, develop and refine digital solutions, including computational thinking, structured logic, user-centred design and technology-enabled development approaches. Topics include:

  - Topic A Plan digital solutions.
  - Topic B Design digital solutions.
  - Topic C Create and refine hi-fidelity digital solution prototypes.

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The subjects that complement this qualification

These A Level subjects might complement this qualification:

- Business
- Computer Science
- Design and Technology
- Economics
- Mathematics
- Media Studies

The types of courses you may progress to

Both the subject-specific knowledge, understanding and skills, and broader transferable skills developed through these units, will help you progress to further study in related areas such as:

- BSc (Hons) Artificial Intelligence
- BSc (Hons) Computer Science
- BSc (Hons) Computer Science with Artificial Intelligence
- BSc (Hons) Data Analytics
- BSc (Hons) Data Science
- BSc (Hons) Data Science and Artificial Intelligence
- BSc (Hons) Information Technology
- BSc (Hons) Software Engineering

Why you should take the Cambridge OCR Level 3 V Level in Digital Systems and Data

You should take this qualification if you want a Level 3 qualification that builds some applied knowledge and skills in digital systems and data. This qualification is the same size as an A Level qualification. It could be taken alongside A Levels and/or other Level 3 qualifications to enhance your learning, helping you to build broader knowledge and skills that are valued in undergraduate study, and relevant for progression to higher education. You would take this qualification alongside A Levels and/or other Level 3 qualifications as part of your study programme at Key Stage 5.

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More information

More information about this qualification is in these documents:

- Sample assessment material (SAM) question papers:
  - Unit F015: Digital systems and security
  - Unit F016: Digital solution design and communication
- Guides to our sample question papers:
  - Unit F015: Digital systems and security
  - Unit F016: Digital solution design and communication
- Sample set assignments:
  - Unit F017: Application of data analytics
  - Unit F018: Application of cyber security
  - Unit F019: Implementing digital systems
  - Unit F020: Developing digital solutions
- Student guide to NEA assignments: Digital systems and data

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2 Why choose Cambridge OCR?

Choose Cambridge OCR and you've got the reassurance that you're working with one of the UK's leading exam boards.

We work with teachers, subject experts, employers and universities to create qualifications that support the needs of all students and help them prepare for their future. We offer A Levels, GCSEs, vocational qualifications, and other academic options to schools, colleges, workplaces, and other organisations.

We are part of Cambridge University Press & Assessment, Europe's largest assessment agency and a department of the University of Cambridge. We play a leading role in developing and delivering assessments worldwide, operating in over 150 countries.

We listen. The decisions we make when we develop our specifications are based on teacher and student feedback. To tell us more about your experiences of teaching our qualifications, join our teacher panel and help shape the future of our qualifications.



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All Cambridge OCR V Level qualifications offered by Cambridge OCR are regulated by Ofqual, the Regulator for qualifications offered in England.

The qualification number for our Cambridge OCR V Level in Digital Systems and Data is TBC.

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2.1 Teacher support

We have a range of support services to help you at every stage of teaching, from preparation to delivery:

Teach Cambridge – our personalised and secure website provides you with access to:

- **extensive resources to download or watch.** Plan and structure your teaching with curriculum planners, schemes of work and teacher guides, and prepare for assessment with examiners' reports, exemplars and NEA guidance.
- **self-paced online training.** Find courses to help you deliver, mark and administer internal assessment for our qualifications under Assessment – NEA/Coursework – Online courses.
- **professional development.** Access a comprehensive programme of assessor-led courses and Q&A sessions with our experts, plus free teacher network events.

ExamBuilder – our free question-building platform helps you to build your own tests using exam questions from past papers.

Access to scripts – a free service to download copies of your students' completed question papers.

Active Results – our free online results analysis service to help you review exam performance.

On-hand subject teams – our experienced advisors will help answer any question you might have. They provide you with key information, including:

- specification and non-exam assessment advice
- updates on resource developments and training opportunities
- information on our subject networks giving an opportunity to share ideas and expertise.

Further help and support

Visit your subject pages to find out more about the assessment and support available, including:

- Understanding the assessment: examined and moderated
- Exploring our exams: a guide to our sample assessment material (SAM).

Not a registered or approved centre of ours? Discover the benefits of becoming one on our website and request trial access to Teach Cambridge.

Have more questions about teaching our qualifications? Explore our Online Support Centre or contact our Customer Support team.

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2.2 People and planet

We have clear commitments to champion sustainability, diversity, trust and respect for our people and planet.



Helping young people develop an ethical view of the world.

We are committed to supporting a curriculum that helps young people develop an ethical view of the world. This enables them to take social responsibility, understand environmental issues and prepare them for the green jobs of the future.



Equality, diversity, inclusion and belonging (EDIB) are part of everything we do.

Our EDIB principles are that we:

- are respectful and considerate
- celebrate differences and promote positive attitudes to belonging
- include perspectives that reflect the diverse cultural and lifestyle backgrounds of our society
- challenge prejudicial views and unconscious biases
- promote a safe and supportive approach to learning
- are accessible and fair, creating positive experiences for all
- provide opportunities for everyone to perform at their best
- are contemporary, relevant and equip everyone to live and thrive in a global, diverse world
- create a shared sense of identity in a modern mixed society with one humanity.

To learn more, including our work on accessibility in our assessment materials, visit our people and planet page.

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2.3 Aims and learning outcomes

We believe in developing specifications that help you bring the subject to life and inspire your students to achieve more.

We've created a teacher-friendly specification based on extensive research and engagement with teachers. It's designed to be straightforward and accessible so that you can tailor the delivery of the course to suit your needs. We aim to encourage students to become responsible for their own learning, confident in discussing ideas, innovative and engaged.

Our Cambridge OCR V Level in Digital Systems and Data will encourage students to:

- develop key knowledge, understanding and skills, relevant to the subject
- think creatively, innovatively, analytically, logically and critically
- develop valuable communication skills that are important in all aspects of further study and life
- develop transferable learning and skills, such as analysing, decision-making, communication, planning, investigative skills and digital responsibility. that are important for progression to HE and can be applied to real-life contexts and work situations
- develop independence and confidence in applying the knowledge and skills that are vital for progression to HE and relevant to the engineering sector and more widely.

2.4 What are the key features of this specification?

The key features of our Cambridge OCR V Level in Digital Systems and Data for you and your students are:

- a simple and intuitive assessment model, that has:
    - exam units, which focus on subject knowledge and understanding
    - applied and practical non-exam assessment units (NEA)
    - optional NEA units to provide flexibility
- a specification developed with teachers specifically for teachers. The specification lays out the subject content, marking criteria, teacher guidance and delivery requirements clearly
- a flexible support package made based on teachers' needs. The support package will help teachers to easily understand the qualification and how it is assessed
- a team of subject advisors who directly support teachers
- a specification designed to:
    - complement A Levels and other Level 3 qualifications in a post-16 study programme
    - develop wider transferable skills, knowledge and understanding desired by HEIs. More detail about the transferable skills these qualifications may develop is in Section 4.3.

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3 Units

3.1 Guidance on unit content

This section describes what must be taught so that students can access all available marks and meet marking criteria.

3.1.1 Terminal assessment rule

The terminal assessment rule means that students must take their exam in the final assessment series of their course. You should be mindful of this when entering students for units. See section 6.2 for more information.

3.1.2 Exam units (F015 and F016)

The exam units contain a number of topics.

For each topic, we list the **teaching content** that must be taught and give information on the **breadth and depth** of teaching needed.

Teaching content

Questions can be asked about anything in the teaching content or breadth and depth columns.

Breadth and depth

The breadth and depth column:

- clarifies the breadth and depth of teaching needed
- indicates the range of knowledge and understanding that can be assessed in the exam
- confirms any aspects that you do not need to teach as 'does not include' statements.

Teaching must cover **both** the **teaching content** and **breadth and depth** columns.

Knowledge and understanding

This is what we mean by knowledge and understanding:

Knowledge	Understanding
• Be able to identify or recognise an item, for example on a diagram. • Use direct recall to answer a question, for example the definition of a term.	• To assess and evidence the perceived meaning of something in greater depth than straight identification or recall. • Understanding will be expressed and presented using terms such as: how; why; when; reasons for; advantages and disadvantages of; benefits and limitations of; purpose of; suitability of; recommendations for improvement;

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	appropriateness of something to/in different contexts.

Students will need to **understand** the content, unless the breadth and depth column identifies it as knowledge only.

Any item(s) that should be taught as **knowledge** only will start with the word 'know' in the breadth and depth column.

All other content must be taught as understanding.

3.1.3 Non-exam assessment (NEA) units (F017 to F020)

The NEA units contain a number of topics.

For each topic, we list **teaching content** that must be taught and give **exemplification**. The exemplification shows the teaching expected to equip students to successfully complete their assignments.

3.1.4 Command words

Appendix A gives information about the command words that will be used in the external assessments and the NEA marking criteria.

3.1.5 Assessment objectives (AOs)

Each V Level qualification has three assessment objectives.

Assessment objectives (AOs)	
AO1	Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of concepts and principles, requirements and approaches relevant to the subject area
AO2	Apply knowledge and understanding of concepts, principles, requirements and approaches and to plan, carry out tasks, produce outputs, and use information appropriately
AO3	Analyse and evaluate information, situations and evidence to make judgements, draw conclusions and make recommendations

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The weightings of the assessment objectives across the units in the qualification are:

Assessment objective	**Exam unit (range)**	**Non-exam assessment unit**	**Overall weighting**
AO1	17.7-21%	7.3-9%	25-30%
AO2	6.3-10.7%	33.7- 34.3%	40-45%
AO3	7.7-11.7%	17.3-18.3%	25-30%
Overall weighting of assessments	**40%**	**60%**	**100%**

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3.2 Exam units

3.2.1 Unit F015: Digital systems and security

Unit aim

Digital systems are used by organisations to support business operations, manage data and information, improve efficiency, support users and deliver services. Understanding how these systems operate and how they can be configured, secured and maintained provides an important foundation for further study and progression into digital, data and technology roles.

In this unit you will learn about the components, operation and management of digital systems and the factors that influence their performance, reliability and security. You will learn how digital systems are configured, tested and supported, how faults can be identified and resolved, and the importance of safe, secure and responsible practices when working with digital technologies, systems and information.

Topic A: Digital systems and infrastructure	
Teaching content	**Breadth and depth**
1 Digital system types 1.1 Desktop 1.2 Mobile 1.3 Server 1.4 Distributed	To include: • Know examples of digital systems • The characteristics, uses and differences between digital system types • The advantages and disadvantages of the different digital system types
2 Digital system components 2.1 Hardware components 2.1.1 Input devices 2.1.2 Output devices 2.1.3 Internal components 2.2 Software components 2.2 1 System software 2.2 .2 Application software	To include: • Know examples of hardware and software components • Know the characteristics of digital system hardware and software components • The functions and roles of digital system hardware and software components • The advantages and disadvantages of digital system hardware and software components • The contribution of digital system components to system functionality and performance

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Topic A: Digital systems and infrastructure	
Teaching content	**Breadth and depth**
3 Network infrastructure components 3.1 Network connectivity devices 3.1 1 Routers 3.1.2 Switches 3.1.3 Wireless access points (WAP) 3.2 Network host devices 3.2.1 Servers 3.2.2 Workstations 3.2.3 Virtual Machines 3.3 Network services 3.3.1 Web service 3.3.2 Email service 3.3.3 File transfer service 3.3.4 File sharing service 3.3.5 Print service 3.3.6 Remote access 3.3.7 Directory service 3.3.8 Database service 3.3.9 Voice over internet protocol (VoIP) 3.4 Data storage types 3.4.1 Local storage 3.4.2 Network storage 3.4.3 Cloud storage	To include: • Know examples of network infrastructure components • The functions and roles of network infrastructure components • Know the characteristics of network infrastructure components • The advantages and disadvantages of data storage types • The role of network services in supporting communication, access to systems, resources and information • How hardware, software and network infrastructure components interact within digital systems • How digital system components operate as integrated environments • The contribution of network infrastructure components to system functionality and performance
4 Operating systems and access management 4.1 Resource management 4.1.1 CPU scheduling 4.1.2 Memory allocation 4.1.3 Device control 4.1.4 Storage organisation 4.2 Security management 4.2.1 User accounts 4.2.2 Levels of access 4.2.3 Access controls	To include: • The role of operating systems in managing resources, users and security • Know examples of user and administrator rights and access controls • Know the characteristics of user and administrator rights and access controls • The advantages and disadvantages of security management

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Topic A: Digital systems and infrastructure	
Teaching content	**Breadth and depth**
4.2.4 Administrator rights 4.2.5 User rights 4.2.6 Auditing and monitoring processes	• How user accounts and levels of access support identification and accountability • The relationship between authentication, authorisation and access control • The principles of least privilege and secure access
5 User interface types 5.1 Graphical user interfaces (GUI) 5.2 Command-line interfaces (CLI) 5.2.1 Text 5.2.2 Speech	To include: • Know examples of user interface types • Know the elements of user interface types • The advantages and disadvantages of different user interface types

Topic B: Security risks, threats and vulnerabilities	
Teaching content	**Breadth and depth**
1 Vulnerabilities 1.1 System 1.1.1 Cloud 1.1.2 Direct access to network and hardware devices 1.1.3 Email/social media 1.1.4 Removable media 1.1.5 Third party access • Suppliers/vendors • Workers 1.1.6 Wireless networks 1.2 Human 1.2.1 Not following policies 1.2.2 Competency levels 1.2.3 Poor data handling 1.2.4 Malicious individuals	To include: • Know the types of system and human vulnerabilities • Know the characteristics of the system and human vulnerabilities • The security vulnerabilities arising from configuration decisions • How system and human vulnerabilities can increase exposure to cyber security risks and threats • The relationship between system vulnerabilities and security risks • How access can be gained to data through different vulnerabilities

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Topic B: Security risks, threats and vulnerabilities	
Teaching content	**Breadth and depth**
2 Common cyber security risks and threats 2.1 Risks 2.1.1 Weak authentication 2.1.2 Misconfigured access permissions 2.1.3 Unpatched software 2.1.4 Exposed network services 2.1.5 Insecure default configurations 2.2 Threats 2.2.1 Malware 2.2.2 Phishing and social engineering 2.2.3 Unauthorised access attempts 2.2.4 Suspicious network behaviour 2.2.5 Botnets 2.2.6 Denial of Service (DoS) 2.2.7 Lack of supplier support	To include: • Know the types of security risks • The security risks associated with system vulnerabilities • The relationship between vulnerabilities, security risks and threats • The potential consequences of security risks for systems, users and organisations • Factors influencing the likelihood and impact of security risks • Know examples of each type of common cyber security threat • The nature and characteristics of each cyber security threat • The potential impacts of cyber security threats • Factors influencing the likelihood, impact and severity of cyber security threats • How cyber security threats can be recognised
3 Impact on systems, users and organisations 3.1 Disruption 3.1.1 Reduced system performance 3.1.2 Reduction in CIA triad compliance 3.2 Loss 3.2.1 Loss of access to services 3.2.2 Data loss, compromise and corruption 3.2.3 Loss of user productivity 3.3 Financial 3.4 Reputational	To include: • Know the impacts to systems, users and organisations. • The impact of security risks on systems, users and organisations • Factors influencing the severity of security incidents • Know what the CIA triad is (confidentiality, integrity and availability) • The importance of maintaining the CIA triad • How security incidents can affect the confidentiality, integrity and availability

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Topic B: Security risks, threats and vulnerabilities	
Teaching content	**Breadth and depth**
	(CIA) of systems, services and information

Topic C: Digital system testing	
Teaching content	**Breadth and depth**
1 Testing 1.1 Testing processes 1.1.1 Functional testing 1.1.2 Performance testing 1.1.3 Usability testing 1.1.4 Security testing 1.1.5 Acceptance testing 1.2 Test plans	To include: • Know the types of testing processes • The purpose of testing processes • The advantages and disadvantages of each testing process listed • The elements included in a test plan • The importance of using a test plan during the testing process • How to accurately complete a test plan when recording testing process activities • The different testing processes used to assess functionality, performance, usability and security of digital systems
2 Test evaluation 2.1 Acceptance criteria 2.2 Performance thresholds 2.3 Test outcomes 2.4 Remedial action 2.5 Deployment decisions 2.6 Continued use decisions	To include: • Know the types of test evaluation • The advantages and disadvantages of each test evaluation listed • How acceptance criteria, performance thresholds and test outcomes are used to evaluate digital systems • How test outcomes are compared against requirements • The importance of remedial action following testing • How testing informs decisions about system readiness for deployment and continued use • How trade-offs can occur between performance, usability and security

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Topic C: Digital system testing	
Teaching content	**Breadth and depth**
3 Technical fault types 3.1 Hardware faults 3.2 Software faults 3.3 Network faults 3.4 User-related faults	To include: • Know examples of technical fault types • The causes of technical faults • How faults can arise from hardware, software, network and user-related factors • The difference between expected and unexpected system behaviour • How differences between expected and actual system behaviour can indicate faults • How system behaviour can be used to support fault identification and resolution
4 System diagnostics 4.1 System behaviour 4.1.1 Expected behaviour 4.1.2 Unexpected behaviour 4.2 Diagnostic processes 4.2.1 Fault identification 4.2.2 Fault resolution 4.3 Diagnostic tools 4.3.1 Hardware • POST • BIOS • Multimeter 4.3.2 Software • Event viewer • System logs 4.3.3 Network • Traceroute • Ping • ipconfig 4.3.4 Security	To include: • Know the purpose of system diagnostics • Know the types of diagnostic tools • The role of system diagnostics • How diagnostic tools can provide a logical approach to fault identification, diagnosis and resolution • The advantages and disadvantages of using diagnostic tools • Factors influencing the selection of diagnostic and corrective actions • The use of root cause analysis to identify underlying causes of faults • Decision-making when selecting remedial actions and fault resolution approaches • The importance of escalation processes when appropriate • Consequences of inaccurate diagnosis or delayed action

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Topic C: Digital system testing	
Teaching content	**Breadth and depth**
• Antivirus scan • Firewall log • Vulnerability scanner 4.4 Root cause analysis 4.5 Escalation processes	• The role of fault resolution activities in restoring expected system operation

Topic D: Safe and secure operational practices	
Teaching content	**Breadth and depth**
1 Safe working practices 1.1 Electrical safety 1.2 Equipment handling 1.3 Safe working environments	To include: • Know how safe working practices can be carried out • The principles of safe, secure and responsible working practices when diagnosing and resolving technical faults
2 Protection of personal and sensitive information 2.1 Secure storage 2.2 Secure sharing 2.3 Data sensitivity	To include: • Know examples of the methods used to protect personal and sensitive information • The importance of protecting personal and sensitive information when storing and sharing • How organisational policies and procedures support the collection, storage, sharing, retention, authorised use and protection of information
3 Privacy and confidentiality 3.1 Confidentiality agreements 3.2 Information disclosure 3.3 User privacy	To include: • Know the role of methods used for privacy and confidentiality • Know the policies used to maintain privacy and confidentiality • The actions needed for compliance with privacy and confidentiality policies

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Topic D: Safe and secure operational practices	
Teaching content	**Breadth and depth**
	• The importance of confidentiality and privacy when handling information • How organisational policies and procedures support responsible handling of information and security-related information
4 System integrity and availability 4.1 Unauthorised changes 4.2 Service availability 4.3 Backup and recovery	To include: • The importance of maintaining system integrity and service availability • How backup and recovery processes support the continuity, resilience and availability of digital systems and services
5 Legal and ethical responsibilities 5.1 Data protection legislation 5.2 Organisational policies and procedures 5.3 Acceptable use of systems and data 5.4 Ethical decision-making	To include: • Know the current legislation related to data protection • Legal and ethical responsibilities when accessing, handling and managing information and digital systems • The actions to be taken to comply with legal and ethical responsibilities • The impact of non-compliance with legal and ethical responsibilities • The purpose of organisational policies and procedures in supporting safe, secure and responsible digital practice • The impact of actions and decisions on users, services and organisations Does not include: • Years of the acts/legislation • Knowing the detailed content of each act/legislation

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Assessment guidance

This unit is assessed by an exam. The exam is 1 hour and 15 minutes. The exam has 60 marks in total.

- All questions are compulsory.
- Question types may include:
  - Forced choice/controlled response questions, including multiple choice questions
  - Short answer, closed response questions
  - Short answer, calculation and working questions
  - Completion tasks
  - Constructed response questions

This will be conducted under examination conditions. For more details refer to our administration pages.

A range of question types will be used in the exam. Each exam paper will contain synoptic marks in a levels of response question, these will be indicated by an (s).

The guide to our sample assessment material for this unit gives more information about the layout and expectations of the exam.

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3.2.2 Unit F016 Digital solution design and communication

Unit aim

Digital solutions are developed to meet user needs, solve problems and improve the way individuals and organisations use technology. Understanding the principles that underpin digital solution design is essential for anyone involved in the development, implementation or improvement of digital products and services.

In this unit you will learn how user needs and requirements influence digital solution design and how communication, collaboration and stakeholder engagement contribute to successful outcomes. You will learn about problem-solving approaches, computational thinking and programming logic used in the development of digital solutions, together with the role of automated and AI-enabled systems. You will also explore the ethical, legal and sustainability considerations that support responsible digital practice.

Topic A: Structured approaches to digital solution design	
Teaching content	**Breadth and depth**
1 Principles of problem solving 1.1 Abstraction 1.2 Decomposition 1.3 Sequencing 1.4 Selection 1.5 Iteration	To include: • Know the purpose of each principle • When each principle is used • Know what is done in each principle • How each principle is used • The advantages and disadvantages of each principle
2 Structured approaches 2.1 Traditional (linear) model 2.1.1 Waterfall 2.2 Prototyping models 2.2.1 Rapid Throwaway 2.2.2 Evolutionary 2.3 Iterative and incremental models 2.3.1 Agile 2.3.2 Scrum 2.3.3 Kanban model	To include: • Know the different structured approaches • Know the characteristics of each model • Know why each model is used • The advantages and disadvantages of each model • How each model aids responsible collaborative working and outcomes • How each model aids inclusive collaboration leading to effective outcomes

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Topic A: Structured approaches to digital solution design	
Teaching content	**Breadth and depth**
3 Stages of developing, testing and refining digital solutions 3.1 Planning 3.1.1 Requirements 3.1.2 Feasibility 3.2 Design 3.3 Creation 3.4 Testing 3.4.1 Test data types 3.4.2 Test plans 3.4.3 Test types 3.5 Implementation 3.5.1 Pilot 3.5.2 Phased 3.5.3 Big bang 3.6 Feedback and refinement 3.7 Documentation 3.8 Maintenance	To include: • Know the stages used when developing digital solutions • Know the tasks involved in each stage • How the stages interact and iterate with each other • How inclusive collaborative working is used at each stage when developing digital solutions
4 Technical job roles, perspectives and expertise 4.1 Application developer 4.2 Cybersecurity- specialist 4.3 Network administrator 4.4 Project manager 4.5 Software engineer 4.6 Systems analyst 4.7 Systems designer 4.8 User experience designer (UXD) 4.9 User interface designer (UID)	To include: • Know the main responsibilities of each job roles related to developing digital solutions • The job roles included in each stage of development • How each job role contributes to decision making and developing high-quality digital solutions • How different job roles can collaborate inclusively in developing digital solutions

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Topic B: Planning digital solution designs	
Teaching content	**Breadth and depth**
1 Digital solution requirements 1.1 Type of system 1.2 Purpose of system 1.3 Client requirements 1.4 End-user needs 1.5 Functional requirements 1.6 Non-functional requirements	To include: • Know the elements of digital solution requirements • The purpose of each element of digital solution requirements • The impact of each element when developing a digital solution design
2 Methods for gathering, analysing and interpreting user requirements 2.1 Document analysis 2.2 Focus groups 2.3 Meetings and interviews 2.4 Observation 2.5 Questionnaires 2.6 Shadowing 2.7 Suggestion analysis	To include: • Know the purposes of each method • When and how each method is used • How the information collected is analysed and interpreted to identify user needs • Know the type of information and data that can be collected using each method • The advantages and disadvantages of using each method
3 Design constraints 3.1 Budget 3.2 Data storage location 3.3 Hardware 3.4 Integration with existing systems 3.5 Organisational policies 3.6 Security 3.7 Software 3.8 Staffing 3.9 Time	To include: • Know the constraints that can influence the design of a digital solution • How each constraint impacts the design of a digital solution • How each constraint influences the design of a digital solution • How technical, organisational and resource constraints influence collaborative decision making, including negotiation, prioritisation and agreement on design trade-offs
4 Tools for translating requirements into digital solution designs 4.1 Use case diagrams 4.2 Data flow diagrams 4.3 Flowcharts	To include: • Know the purposes of each tool • Know the components and conventions each tool uses to translate user needs

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Topic B: Planning digital solution designs	
Teaching content	**Breadth and depth**
4.4 Wireframes 4.5 Visualisation diagrams 4.6 Mock-ups 4.7 Storyboards	• The advantages and disadvantages of each tool • How the user needs determine/affect the selection of the tool • The use of tools to translate user requirements into digital solution design
5 Feedback loop in development 5.1 User feedback 5.2 Stakeholder feedback 5.3 Shared understanding 5.4 Solution iteration	To include: • The role of different types of feedback when developing a digital solution design • Know the different types of feedback that can be used when developing a digital solution design • How feedback can develop understanding between different roles involved in the development of a digital solution design • How iteration can be used when designing a digital solution using integrated feedback. • How different perspectives including client, end user and technical job roles contribute to decision making and the quality of proposed solutions

Topic C: Automated systems and Artificial Intelligence (AI)	
Teaching content	**Breadth and depth**
1 Automated and AI-enabled systems 1.1 Automated systems 1.2 AI-enabled systems 1.3 Inputs 1.4 AI-generated outputs 1.5 AI Agents 1.6 AI Tools	To include: • Know what automated systems are • Know what AI-enabled systems are • How inputs are used by AI-enabled systems to generate outputs • Know what AI Agents are • The purpose and use of AI Agents

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Topic C: Automated systems and Artificial Intelligence (AI)	
Teaching content	**Breadth and depth**
	• The advantages and disadvantages of using AI Agents • The impact of using AI-Agents • Know what AI Tools are • The purpose and use of AI Tools • How AI Tools are used in different sectors Examples of **the sectors where AI Tools are used** may include: • Customer services • Education • Financial • Health • Marketing • Retail • Translation Assessment will be based on the knowledge, understanding and skills covered in this specification. To support assessment responses students may also refer to current and emerging developments in AI technologies.
2 Automated and AI-enabled decision making 2.1 Automated decision making 2.2 AI-enabled decision making	To include: • Know the role of automated systems in decision making • Know the role of AI-enabled systems in decision making • The advantages and disadvantages of using automated and AI-enabled systems in decision making • The limitations and bias of automated and AI-enabled systems

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Topic C: Automated systems and Artificial Intelligence (AI)	
Teaching content	**Breadth and depth**
3. Human oversight of automated and AI-enabled systems 3.1 Levels of autonomy 3.2 Human approval of actions 3.3 Validation of outputs 3.4 Accountability 3.5 Governance requirements	To include: • The role of human oversight in the use of automated and AI-enabled systems • The level of autonomy for automated and AI-enabled systems and human approval
4 Prompts and structured inputs for automated and AI-enabled systems 4.1 Types of input 4.2 Prompt design 4.3 Prompt refinement 4.4 Limitations of prompt design	To include: • Know the types of prompts: ○ Natural language ○ Structured inputs ○ Data inputs supplied for the system ○ Questioning • Know the components of a structured prompt (role+ task+ context+ constraints+ output format) • How to use the components of a structured prompt to produce quality outputs • How unclear/missing components of a prompt impacts quality of outputs
5 Generated outputs from automated and AI-enabled systems 5.1 Ambiguity of wording 5.2 Biased outputs 5.3 Confidence and uncertainty in outputs 5.4 Hallucinated outputs 5.5 Inaccurate outputs 5.6 Incomplete information 5.7 Input quality and reliability 5.8 Output accuracy 5.9 Output relevance	To include: • Know the limitations of outputs generated by automated and AI-enabled systems • The relevance of accurate outputs by automated and AI-enabled systems • The implications of inaccurate outputs from automated and AI-enabled systems

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Topic C: Automated systems and Artificial Intelligence (AI)	
Teaching content	**Breadth and depth**
6 Responsible use of automated and AI-enabled systems 6.1 Accountability 6.2 Bias 6.3 Explainability 6.4 Fairness 6.5 Human oversight 6.6 Impact of automated decisions 6.7 Inclusion 6.8 Organisational policies and procedures for the use of automated and AI-enabled systems 6.9 Responsible handling of data 6.10 Social and ethical implications 6.11 Transparency 6.12 User trust and confidence	To include: • Know the concepts of responsible use of automated and AI-enabled systems • Know the social and ethical implications of the use of automated and AI-enabled systems • How automated and AI-enabled systems can be used responsibly • How automated and AI-enabled systems impacts society

Topic D: Information communication	
Teaching content	**Breadth and depth**
1 Methods of communication 1.1 Technology based 1.1.1 Cloud collaboration tools 1.1.2 Email 1.1.3 Error messages 1.1.4 Instant messaging 1.1.5 Logs 1.1.6 Screenshots 1.1.7 Telephone 1.1.8 Ticketing /helpdesk systems 1.1.9 Video conference 1.2 Document based 1.2.1 FAQs/Knowledge base articles	To include: • Know the characteristics of each communication method • Know why each communication method is used • The advantages and disadvantages of each communication method • How each communication method enables issue resolution and effective service delivery • The difference between communication-based support and technical troubleshooting • How each communication method can be used to respond to user issues

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Topic D: Information communication	
Teaching content	**Breadth and depth**
1.2.2 Issue responses 1.2.3 Manuals/User Guides 1.2.4 Presentations 1.2.5 Reports 1.2.6 Service updates 1.2.7 Technical documentation	
2 Factors impacting quality of communication 2.1 Accessibility 2.2 Accuracy 2.3 Bias 2.4 Clarity 2.5 Comparability 2.6 Consistency 2.7 Readability 2.8 Reliability 2.9 Timeliness 2.10 Validity	To include: • Know the different factors that can impact the quality of communication • How each factor can be used to develop clear, efficient and effective communication for users • How each factor can lead to poor quality communications experienced by users
3. Communication skills 3.1 Appropriate language to meet needs of the audience 3.1.1 Formal 3.1.2 Informal 3.1.3 Technical 3.1.4 Non-technical 3.2 Interpreting information 3.2.1 Sources 3.2.2 Active listening 3.3 Questioning techniques to elicit specific information 3.3.1 Open 3.3.2 Closed 3.3.3 Probing	To include: • Know the characteristics of each communication skill • How each communication skill aids clear communication • How each communication skill can be adapted for use with different audiences • How to support users when troubleshooting problems or supporting system use • How each communication skill can be used by automated and AI-enabled systems • The importance of maintaining ethical, confidential and private communications

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Topic D: Information communication	
Teaching content	**Breadth and depth**
3.3.4 Summarising 3.4 Maintaining ethical, confidential and private communications	• How to ensure the maintenance of ethical, confidential and private communications • How to respond appropriately to user queries and manage expectations, including explaining next steps, likely timescales and limitations, and checking understanding

Topic E: Ethical, legal and sustainability considerations	
Teaching content	**Breadth and depth**
1 Ethical considerations 1.1 Fair use of digital content 1.2 Responsible use of digital content and systems 1.3 Protection of individual rights	To include: • Ethical considerations when using digital technologies • The relationship between ethical practice, transparency and trust in digital technologies • The impact of ethical and unethical use of digital technologies on individuals and organisations • Know the ethical requirements that apply to digital practitioners: professional codes of conduct, accessibility standards, and organisational policies • How ethical requirements are applied when designing and developing digital solutions • The consequences of not meeting ethical requirements, for users, organisations and practitioners

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Topic E: Ethical, legal and sustainability considerations	
Teaching content	**Breadth and depth**
2 Legal considerations 2.1 Intellectual property rights 2.2 Copyright 2.3 Patents 2.4 Trademarks 2.5 Creative Common licence(s) 2.6 Attribution of ownership of digital content 2.7 Use of third-party content	To include: • Know the purpose of protecting intellectual property • Know the current legislation related to the protection of intellectual property • The actions to be taken to comply with legal responsibilities • The impact of non-compliance with legal responsibilities • The importance of respecting intellectual property rights and copyright when creating, sharing and using digital content • The responsible use of third-party content in inputs and outputs • Risks associated with unauthorised use, copyright infringement, lack of attribution and misuse of digital content Does not include: • Years of the acts/legislation • Knowing the detailed content of each act/legislation
3 Sustainability considerations 3.1 Digital 3.1.1 Device longevity 3.1.2 Device maintenance 3.1.3 Device lifecycle 3.2 Natural resources 3.3 Energy efficiency 3.4 Data storage and retention 3.5 Digital waste/disposal	To include: • The importance of considering sustainability when developing and using digital technologies • The impact of resource consumption, energy use and device lifecycle on sustainability • Sustainability considerations, including environmental, economic and social impacts

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Topic E: Ethical, legal and sustainability considerations	
Teaching content	**Breadth and depth**

	• The benefits and limitations of sustainable digital practices for organisations and the environment
	• Sustainability requirements for digital solutions including:
	  ○ Legal and regulatory
	  ○ Organisational policy
	  ○ Client requirements
	• How sustainability requirements are included in design briefs and requirements specifications
	• How to check that a solution meets its sustainability requirements

Assessment guidance

This unit is assessed by an exam. The exam is 1 hour and 15 minutes. The exam has 60 marks in total.

- All questions are compulsory.
- Question types may include:
  - Forced choice/controlled response questions, including multiple choice questions
  - Short answer, closed response questions
  - Short answer, calculation and working questions
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3.3 NEA units

3.3.1 Unit F017: Application of data analytics

Unit aim

Data is used by organisations to support decision making, monitor performance and improve outcomes. Effective use of data requires the ability to identify requirements, prepare and analyse data, interpret findings, communicate insights and evaluate outcomes.

In this unit learners will apply knowledge and understanding to prepare, analyse, interpret and present data from different sources to produce justified insights that support organisational decision making within defined workplace contexts. Learners will develop the ability to use appropriate analytical approaches, exercise professional judgement, evaluate the reliability of findings and communicate outcomes effectively to different audiences.

Topic A: Analyse data requirements	
Teaching content	**Exemplification**
1 Data, information and organisational decision making 1.1 Operational decision making 1.2 Organisational objectives and outcomes 1.3 Performance monitoring 1.4 Resource planning 1.5 Service improvement	To include: • The difference between data and information • How organisations use data to support decision making across different business functions and contexts • The purpose of preparing, analysing, interpreting and presenting data to generate insights • How to interpret a defined analytical and decision-making purpose
2 Datasets 2.1 Data structures 2.1.1 Structured 2.1.2 Semi-structured 2.1.3 Unstructured 2.2 Data formats 2.2.1 Numerical 2.2.2 Text 2.2 3 Date/time 2.2.4 Boolean	To include: • How datasets are structured, formatted and defined within datasets from different sources • The difference between structured, semi-structured and unstructured data • How data structure and format influence storage, retrieval and analysis • Factors affecting the suitability of datasets for a particular purpose

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Topic A: Analyse data requirements	
Teaching content	**Exemplification**
2.3 Data sources 2.3.1 Internal 2.3.2 External 2.3.3 Open/public data	• How to evaluate the suitability of datasets for a defined purpose. Examples of **datasets** may include: • Customer data • Financial data • Internet of Things (IoT) data • Sales data • Sensor data • Survey data • Web analytics data
3 Data quality issues and impact on analysis 3.1 Missing data 3.1.2 Empty fields and null values 3.1.3 Partially completed records 3.2 Duplicated records 3.3 Inconsistent formats 3.4 Conflicting values across sources 3.5 Outliers and anomalies 3.6 Differences between data sources 3.7 Common fields used to connect datasets 3.8 Risks when combining datasets 3.8.1 inconsistent definitions 3.8.2 Format differences 3.8.3 Misaligned fields and values 3.9 Data quality indicators 3.10 Fitness for purpose 3.10.1 Relevance 3.10.2 Accuracy 3.10.3 Completeness 3.10.4 Consistency 3.10.5 Timeliness	To include: • How data quality issues affect the reliability and validity of analysis • How combining datasets can reveal additional relationships, trends and insights not visible when datasets are analysed separately • How to evaluate suitability, relevance and reliability of data from different sources, including risks associated with combining datasets • How to apply techniques to identify, validate and address data quality issues before analysis

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Topic A: Analyse data requirements	
Teaching content	**Exemplification**
4 Metadata, field definitions and documentation 4.1 Metadata 4.1.1 Data source 4.1.2 Date/time 4.1.3 Collection method 4.1.4 Ownership 4.2 Field definitions 4.2.1 Field name and meaning 4.2.2 Data type 4.2.3 Units and value ranges 4.3 Data structure documentation 4.3.1 Data structure 4.3.2 Data cleaning rules 4.3.3 Analytical decisions 4.3.4 Assumptions 4.3.5 Outputs and findings	To include: • The role of metadata, field definitions and documentation in supporting analysis and interpretation • How documentation supports transparency, accountability and reproducibility of analytical processes • How to record analytical decisions, assumptions and outputs • How metadata and documentation support the recording of analytical decisions, assumptions and outputs

Topic B: Prepare and analyse data	
Teaching content	**Exemplification**
1. Data validation and preparation methods 1.1 Accuracy 1.1 1 Format consistency 1.1.2 Data type consistency 1.1.3 Value range checks 1.2 Completeness 1.2.1 Required fields 1.2.2 Missing records 1.2.3 Incomplete records 1.3 Consistency 1.3.1 Duplicate records 1.3.2 Consistent values across datasets	To include: • How validation and preparation activities improve data quality and readiness for analysis • How data preparation affects the reliability of analytical findings • How to apply validation techniques to identify and correct data quality issues • How to prepare data for analysis through validation, checking formats and confirming completeness

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Topic B: Prepare and analyse data	
Teaching content	**Exemplification**
1.3.3 Consistent representations of data 1.4 Validity 1.4.1 Expected value ranges 1.4.2 Structural issues 1.4.3 Language differences 1.5 Prepare data for analysis 1.5.1 Correcting identified issues 1.5.2 Standardising formats 1.5.3 Removing duplicates 1.5.4 Preparing datasets for analytical processes	
2 Analytical techniques and systems 2.1 Data organisation 2.1.1 Sorting of data 2.1.2 Filtering of data 2.1.3 Grouping of records 2.2 Calculations and comparisons 2.2.1 Totals 2.2.2 Averages 2.2.3 Percentages 2.2.4 Rates of change 2.2.5 Frequency counts 2.2.6 Comparison of categories 2.2.7 Ranking 2.3 Patterns and relationships 2.3.1 Trends over time 2.3.2 Relationships between variables 2.3.3 Correlation and association 2.3.4 Variability 2.3.5 Anomalies and outliers 2.4 Automated and AI-enabled systems 2.4.1 Automated pattern identification	To include: • How to apply analytical techniques and to identify trends, patterns, relationships and anomalies • How to select analytical techniques and systems appropriate for the data type and analytical purpose • How to interpret variability and relationships within datasets • The role, advantages and disadvantages of automated and AI-enabled analytical systems in supporting pattern identification and insight generation and the need to evaluate outputs critically • How to analyse prepared datasets to identify patterns, relationships and trends

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Topic B: Prepare and analyse data	
Teaching content	**Exemplification**
2.4.2 Trend detection 2.4.3 Insight generation 2.4.4 Human review and validation outputs	
3 Analytical outputs and decision making 3.1 Output forms 3.1.1 Summaries 3.1.2 Comparisons 3.1.3 Trends 3.1.4 Indicators 3.2 Output use 3.2.1 Supporting conclusions 3.2.2 Supporting decision making 3.2.3 Identifying actions 3.2.4 Communicating insights 3.2.5 Measuring performance 3.3 Output evaluation 3.3.1 Relevance to purpose 3.3.2 Usefulness for decision making 3.3.3 Evidence provided by outputs	To include: • How to examine analytical outputs in relation to the defined purpose • How to produce analytical outputs to inform conclusions and decision making • How outputs support evidence-based recommendations

Topic C: Interpret results and draw conclusions	
Teaching content	**Exemplification**
1 Interpretation of analytical findings 1.1 Trends 1.2 Patterns 1.3 Relationships between data values 1.4 Anomalies and outliers 1.5 Contextual factors 1.6 Meaning and significance of findings 1.7 Relationships analysis 1.7.1 Correlation and association	To include: • The role of interpretation, context and professional judgement when analysing findings • How to Interpret trends, patterns, relationships and anomalies to generate meaningful insights • The distinction between correlation, association and meaningful relationships

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Topic C: Interpret results and draw conclusions	
Teaching content	**Exemplification**
1.7.2 Meaningful relationships 1.7.3 Coincidental patterns	• How trends, patterns and relationships contribute to analytical understanding • How to use findings to support analytical understanding and decision making
2 Evidence-based conclusions and recommendations 2.1 Interpretation of findings 2.2 Evidence-based conclusions 2.3 Justified conclusions 2.4 Professional judgement 2.5 Strength of evidence 2.6 Decision support 2.7 Evidence-based recommendations 2.8 Conclusion development 2.8.1 Linking evidence to conclusions 2.8.2 Supporting conclusions with findings 2.8.3 Recognising uncertainty when drawing conclusions	To include: • How professional judgement supports the development of evidence-based conclusions • How to evaluate the strength and reliability of evidence • How to develop justified conclusions and recommendations from analysed data • How to draw reasoned conclusions from analysed data that acknowledge uncertainty where appropriate
3. Confidence in findings 3.1 Data quality 3.2 Data limitations 3.3 Reliability of outputs 3.4 Confidence in conclusions 3.5 Uncertainty in analysis 3.6 Representativeness of data 3.7 Sampling issues 3.8 Outliers and unusual values	To include: • How data quality, analytical methods and limitations and uncertainty influence confidence in findings • How to evaluate the effects of uncertainty, bias, outliers and representativeness on conclusions • The relationship between confidence in findings and effective decision making • How to assess the reliability of conclusions using available evidence
4. Bias and limitations 4.1 Bias 4.1.1 Data collection	To include: • How bias can arise through data collection, selection, representation and presentation

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Topic C: Interpret results and draw conclusions	
Teaching content	**Exemplification**
4.1.2 Data selection 4.1.3 Data representation 4.2 Missing or partial data 4.3 Representativeness of datasets 4.4 Dataset limitations 4.5 Fair and responsible interpretation 4.6 Inclusive and unbiased approaches to analytical practice	• How to evaluate the impact of bias, limitations and incompleteness on findings and conclusions • How dataset limitations affect interpretation and decision making • How to apply the principles of inclusive, fair and responsible data handling and interpretation • How to interpret analytical findings and consider potential sources of bias and limitation in the data

Topic D: Communicate findings	
Teaching content	**Exemplification**
1 Presentation formats and analytical outputs 1.1 Output formats 1.1.1 Graphical visualisations 1.1.2 Tabular presentations 1.1.3 Text-based summaries 1.1.4 Combined presentation formats 1.1.5 Interactive and digital dashboards 1.2 Automated and AI-enabled outputs 1.2.1 Automated visualisations 1.2.2 AI-generated summaries 1.2.3 Automated dashboard tools 1.3 Appropriateness of output 1.3.1 Audience requirements 1.3.2 Workplace context 1.3.3 Decision-making purpose 1.3.4 Technical and non-technical audiences 1.3.5 Remote and hybrid environments	To include: • The purpose and suitability of different presentation formats and analytical outputs • How to select presentation approaches appropriate to the audience, workplace context and decision-making purpose. • How presentation choices, including automated and AI-enabled tools, can influence interpretation • How to select and apply output formats to present analysed insights effectively

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Topic D: Communicate findings	
Teaching content	**Exemplification**
2 Communication principles 2.1 Visual communication principles 2.1.1 Clarity 2.1.2 Accuracy 2.1.3 Consistency 2.1.4 Appropriate scale 2.1.5 Appropriate proportion 2.1.6 Effective labelling 2.1.7 Avoiding distortion and misinterpretation 2.2 Accessibility and inclusion 2.2.1 Readability 2.2.2 Colour and contrast considerations 2.2.3 Accessibility features 2.2.4 Diverse users and audiences 2.2.5 Inclusive communication 2.2.6 User needs and preferences 2.3 Transparency 2.3.1 Data sources 2.3.2 Assumptions 2.3.3 Limitations 2.3.4 Confidence in findings	To include: • How to apply visual communication principles to present information accurately, proportionately and without distortion • How to create accessible and inclusive outputs that meet the needs of diverse audiences • The importance of transparency when communicating analytical findings • How to communicate analytical findings, insights and conclusions clearly to technical and non-technical audiences • How to ensure outputs are accurate, clearly labelled and transparent about data sources, assumptions and limitations
3 Review and improve communication of analytical output 3.1 Output review 3.1.1 Accuracy checks 3.1.2 Relevance checks 3.1.3 Accessibility review 3.1.4 Audience suitability 3.1.5 Consistency of presentation 3.2 Information governance considerations 3.2.1 Privacy requirements	To include: • How privacy, confidentiality and information governance requirements affect the presentation and sharing of analytical findings • How to apply organisational policies relating to the authorised use, protection and sharing of information • How to review outputs for accuracy, accessibility, clarity, relevance and audience suitability

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Topic D: Communicate findings	
Teaching content	**Exemplification**
3.2.2 Confidentiality requirements 3.2.3 Protection of personal and sensitive information 3.2.4 Authorised sharing and use of information 3.3 Output refinement 3.3.1 Revise outputs based on review findings 3.3.2 Improve clarity and relevance	• How to refine presented outputs to improve communication effectiveness including: clarity, accessibility and relevance

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Marking criteria

The tables below give the marking criteria for the tasks in the set assignment for this unit.

Section 5.4 provides full information on how to assess the NEA units and apply the marking criteria.

The command words used in the marking criteria are defined in Appendix A.

Task 1a	**Explain** why the organisation needs to complete a data analysis exercise. [AO1x1; AO2x2]		
Response level	**Mark**	**Marking Criteria**	
Mark Band 1	**1**	**Secure:**	**Two** relevant reasons for conducting the data analysis are included with **limited** explanation.
Mark Band 2	**2**	**Secure:**	**Some** of the **main** reasons for conducting the data analysis are included with **clear** explanation.
Mark Band 3	**3**	**Secure:**	**All reasons** for conducting the data analysis are included with **detailed** explanation.
Assessment guidance: • Students **could** apply the purpose of data analysis from Topic A1.			

If your work does not meet Mark Band 1 criteria, you will be awarded zero marks for this task.

Task 1b	**Explain** the data requirements for the analysis [AO1x1, AO2x2]		
Response level	**Mark**	**Marking Criteria**	
Mark Band 1	**1**	**Secure:**	**Two** relevant data requirements are included with **limited** explanation.
Mark Band 2	**2**	**Secure:**	**Some** of the **main** data requirements are included with **clear** explanation.
Mark Band 3	**3**	**Secure:**	**All** data requirements are included with **detailed** explanation.
Assessment guidance: • Students **could** apply datasets and data sources from Topic A2.			

If your work does not meet Mark Band 1 criteria, you will be awarded zero marks for this task.

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Task 1c	**Assess** the suitability of datasets for analysis, identifying data quality issues and concluding on overall suitability. [AO1x1, AO3x5]		
Response level	**Mark**	**Marking Criteria**	
Mark Band 1	**1**	**Just:**	**Basic** assessment of data suitability with **partial** coverage of **two** data quality issues and a conclusion on overall suitability.
	2	**Secure:**	**Basic** assessment of data suitability with **partial** coverage of **more than two** data quality issues and a conclusion on overall suitability.
Mark Band 2	**3**	**Just:**	**Clear** assessment of data suitability with **partial** coverage of the **main** data quality issues and a conclusion on overall suitability.
	4	**Secure:**	**Clear** assessment of data suitability with **full** coverage of the **main** data quality issues and a conclusion on overall suitability.
Mark Band 3	**5**	**Just:**	**Detailed** assessment of dataset suitability with **partial** coverage of **all** data quality issues and an appropriate conclusion on overall suitability.
	6	**Secure:**	**Detailed** assessment of dataset suitability with **full** coverage of **all** data quality issues and an appropriate conclusion on overall suitability.
Assessment guidance: • Students **could** apply data quality issues and suitability for analysis from Topic A3 and metadata, field definitions and documentation from Topic A4.			

If your work does not meet Mark Band 1 criteria, you will be awarded zero marks for this task.

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Task 1d	**Use** data validation and preparation methods to prepare the data for analysis and explain why each method has been chosen [AO1x1; AO2x5]		
Response level	**Mark**	**Marking Criteria**	
Mark Band 1	**1**	**Just:**	**Two** data preparation methods are used with **limited** explanation of suitability.
	2	**Secure:**	**More than two** data preparation methods are used with **limited** explanation of suitability.
Mark Band 2	**3**	**Just:**	**More than two** data preparation methods are used with **clear** explanation of suitability.
	4	**Secure:**	**Most** of the **main** data preparation methods are used with **clear** explanation of suitability.
Mark Band 3	**5**	**Just:**	**Most** of the **main** data preparation methods are used with **detailed** explanation of suitability.
	6	**Secure:**	**All relevant** data preparation methods are used with **detailed** explanation of suitability.
Assessment guidance: • Students **could** use the data validation and preparation methods from Topic B1.			

If your work does not meet Mark Band 1 criteria, you will be awarded zero marks for this task.

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Task 2a	**Apply** analytical techniques and systems to the datasets prepared in Task 1 [AO1x1, AO2x5]		
Response level	**Mark**	**Marking Criteria**	
Mark Band 1	**1**	**Just:**	**Two** analytical techniques **or** systems are applied with **basic** accuracy.
	2	**Secure:**	**More than two** analytical techniques **or** systems are applied with **basic** accuracy.
Mark Band 2	**3**	**Just:**	**More than two** analytical techniques **or** systems are applied with **partia**l accuracy.
	4	**Secure:**	**Most** of the **main** analytical techniques **and** systems are applied with **partial** accuracy.
Mark Band 3	**5**	**Just:**	**Most of** the **main** analytical techniques **and** systems are applied with **complete** accuracy.
	6	**Secure:**	**All relevant** analytical techniques **and** systems are applied with **complete** accuracy.
Assessment guidance: • To achieve 1-3 marks, students must apply the required number of **either** techniques **or** systems or the required number across both. For 4-6 marks, students must evaluate the required number of **both** techniques **and** systems. • Students **could** use the analytical techniques and systems from Topic B2.			

If your work does not meet Mark Band 1 criteria, you will be awarded zero marks for this task.

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Task 2b	**Create** analytical outputs that identify findings and support the development of conclusions. [AO1x1, AO2x5]		
Response level	**Mark**	**Marking Criteria**	
Mark Band 1	**1**	**Just:**	**Two** analytical outputs are created with **limited** accuracy.
	2	**Secure:**	**More than two** analytical outputs are created with **limited** accuracy.
Mark Band 2	**3**	**Just:**	**More than two** analytical outputs are created with **partial** accuracy.
	4	**Secure:**	**Most** of the **main** analytical outputs are created with **partial** accuracy.
Mark Band 3	**5**	**Just:**	**Most** of the **main** analytical outputs are created with **complete** accuracy.
	6	**Secure:**	**All relevant** analytical outputs are created with **complete** accuracy.
Assessment guidance: • Students **could** use the forms and uses of analytical outputs from Topic B3.			

If your work does not meet Mark Band 1 criteria, you will be awarded zero marks for this task.

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Task 2c	**Assess** analytical outputs in relation to the defined purpose to identify and conclude on the initial findings**.** [AO2x3, AO3x3]		
Response level	**Mark**	**Marking Criteria**	
Mark Band 1	**1**	**Just:**	**Two** findings are identified and concluded upon from a **limited** assessment of analytical outputs.
	2	**Secure:**	**More than two** findings are identified and concluded upon from a **limited** assessment of analytical outputs
Mark Band 2	**3**	**Just:**	**More than two** findings are identified and concluded upon from a **clear** assessment of analytical outputs.
	4	**Secure:**	**Most** of the **main** findings are identified and concluded upon from a **clear** assessment of analytical outputs.
Mark Band 3	**5**	**Just:**	**Most** of the **main** findings are identified and concluded upon from a **detailed** assessment of analytical outputs.
	6	**Secure:**	**All relevant** findings are identified and concluded upon from a **detailed** assessment of analytical outputs.
Assessment guidance: • Students **could** use analytical outputs and decision making from Topic B3.			

If your work does not meet Mark Band 1 criteria, you will be awarded zero marks for this task.

Task 3a	**Interpret** the analytical outputs produced in Task 2 to develop evidence-based conclusions [AO2x1, AO3x2]		
Response level	**Mark**	**Marking Criteria**	
Mark Band 1	**1**	**Secure:**	**More than two** conclusions are developed with **basic** interpretation.
Mark Band 2	**2**	**Secure:**	**Most** of the **main** conclusions are developed with **clear** interpretation.
Mark Band 3	**3**	**Secure:**	**All relevant** conclusions are developed with **detailed** interpretation.
Assessment guidance: • Students **could** use interpretation of analytical findings from Topic C1.			

If your work does not meet Mark Band 1 criteria, you will be awarded zero marks for this task.

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Task 3b	**Explain** analytical decisions, assumptions and outputs produced [AO2x3]		
Response level	**Mark**	**Marking Criteria**	
Mark Band 1	**1**	**Secure:**	**Two** analytical decisions, assumptions and outputs are included with **limited** explanation.
Mark Band 2	**2**	**Secure:**	**Most** of the **main** analytical decisions, assumptions and outputs are included with **clear** explanation.
Mark Band 3	**3**	**Secure:**	**All relevant** analytical decisions, assumptions and outputs are included with **detailed** explanation.

Assessment guidance:

- Students **must** document and explain analytical decisions, assumptions **and** outputs produced during **Tasks 1** and **2**.
- Evidence **must** demonstrate:
  - What decisions were made.
  - What assumptions were made.
  - Why they were made.
  - How they influenced the analysis.
  - How they support transparency and interpretation of findings.
- Students **could** use metadata, field definitions and documentation from Topic A4.
- Students **could** apply Interpretation of analytical findings from Topic C1 and evidence-based conclusions and recommendations from Topic C2.

If your work does not meet Mark Band 1 criteria, you will be awarded zero marks for this task.

Task 3c	**Task 3c: Justify** evidence-based recommendations [AO3x3]		
Response level	**Mark**	**Marking Criteria**	
Mark Band 1	**1**	**Secure:**	**Two** recommendations are included with **limited** justification.
Mark Band 2	**2**	**Secure:**	**Some** recommendations are included with **clear** justification.
Mark Band 3	**3**	**Secure:**	**Appropriate** recommendations are included with **detailed** justification.

Assessment guidance:

- Student **could** apply evidence-based conclusions and recommendations from Topic C2.

If your work does not meet Mark Band 1 criteria, you will be awarded zero marks for this task.

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Task 3d	**Evaluate** the confidence that can be placed in your conclusions [AO3x6]		
Response level	**Mark**	**Marking Criteria**	
Mark Band 1	**1**	**Just:**	**Two** limitations **or** sources of bias are identified with **limited** evaluation of the impact on confidence in conclusions.
	2	**Secure:**	**More than two** limitations **or** sources of bias are identified with **limited** evaluation of the impact on confidence in conclusions.
Mark Band 2	**3**	**Just:**	**More than two** limitations **and** sources of bias are identified with **clear** evaluation of the impact on confidence in conclusions.
	4	**Secure:**	**Most** of the **main** limitations **and** sources of bias are identified with **clear** evaluation of the impact on confidence in conclusions.
Mark Band 3	**5**	**Just:**	**Most** of the **main** limitations **and** sources of bias are identified with **detailed** evaluation of the impact on confidence in conclusions.
	6	**Secure:**	**All relevant** limitations **and** sources of bias are identified with **detailed** evaluation of the impact on confidence in conclusions.

Assessment guidance:

- For mark band 1, students **must** evaluate the required number of **either** limitations **or** sources of bias **or** the required number **across both**. For mark bands 2 and 3, students must evaluate the required number of **both** limitations **and** sources of bias
- Students **could** use confidence in findings from Topic C3 and bias and limitations from Topic C4.

If your work does not meet Mark Band 1 criteria, you will be awarded zero marks for this task.

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Task 4a	**Use** presentation formats to communicate your conclusions and recommendations from Task 3 [AO1x1, AO2x5] (**S**)		
Response level	**Mark**	**Marking Criteria**	
Mark Band 1	**1**	**Just:**	**Two** presentation formats are used with **limited** consideration of communication principles.
	2	**Secure:**	**More than two** presentation formats are used with **limited** consideration of communication principles.
Mark Band 2	**3**	**Just:**	**More than two** presentation formats are used with **clear** consideration of communication principles.
	4	**Secure:**	**Most** of the **main** presentation formats are used with **clear** consideration of communication principles.
Mark Band 3	**5**	**Just:**	**Most** of the **main** presentation formats are used with **comprehensive** consideration of communication principles. (**S**)
	6	**Secure:**	**All relevant** presentation formats are used with **comprehensive** consideration of communication principles. (**S**)

Assessment guidance:

- Students **must:** select presentation formats appropriate to the audience and purpose.
- Students need to draw on knowledge and understanding from across the course of study in order to achieve mark band 3. (**S**)
- Students **could** use presentation formats and analytical outputs from Topic D1, communication principles from Topic D2 and content from F016 Topic D.

If your work does not meet Mark Band 1 criteria, you will be awarded zero marks for this task.

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Task 4b	**Review** the communication of your analytical outputs and justify improvements [AO3x3] (**S**)		
Response level	**Mark**	**Marking Criteria**	
Mark Band 1	**1**	**Secure:**	The communication of analytical outputs is reviewed with **limited** justification of improvements.
Mark Band 2	**2**	**Secure:**	The communication of analytical outputs is reviewed with **clear** justification of improvements.
MB3	**3**	**Secure:**	The communication of analytical outputs is reviewed with **detailed** justification of improvements that would improve communication. (**S**)
Assessment guidance: • Students **must** include how the clarity, accessibility and relevance could be improved. • Students need to draw on knowledge and understanding from across the course of study in order to achieve mark band 3. (**S**) • Students **could** use review and improve communication of analytical output from Topic D3 and content from F016 Topic D.			

If your work does not meet Mark Band 1 criteria, you will be awarded zero marks for this task.

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Synoptic assessment

Some of the knowledge, understanding and skills needed to complete this unit will draw on the learning in Unit F015: Digital systems and security and, Unit F016: Digital solution design and communication.

This table details these synoptic links.

Unit F015: Digital systems and security		**Unit F017: Application of data analytics**	
Topic		**Topic**	
D2	Protection of personal and sensitive information	D3	Review and improve communication of analytical output
D3	Privacy and confidentiality	D3	Review and improve communication of analytical output
D5	Legal and ethical responsibilities	C4 D2 D3	Bias and limitations Communication principles Review and improve communication of analytical output

Unit F016: Digital solution design and communication		**Unit F017: Application of data analytics**	
Topic		**Topic**	
B1	Digital system requirements	A1	Data, information and organisational decision making
B4	Tools for translating requirements into digital solution designs	A1	Data, information and organisational decision making
C1	Automated and AI-enabled systems	B2	Analytical techniques and systems
C2	Automated and AI-enabled decision making	B2 C3 C4	Analytical techniques and systems Confidence in findings Bias and limitations
C3	Human oversight of automated and AI-enabled systems	B2 C3	Analytical techniques and systems Confidence in findings
C4	Prompts and structured inputs for automated and AI-enabled systems	B2 C3 C4	Analytical techniques and systems Confidence in findings Bias and limitations
C5	Generated outputs from automated and AI-enabled systems	B2 C3 C4	Analytical techniques and systems Confidence in findings Bias and limitations

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Unit F016: Digital solution design and communication		**Unit F017: Application of data analytics**	
Topic		**Topic**	
C6	Responsible use of automated and AI-enabled systems	C4 D2	Bias and limitations Communication principles
D1	Methods of communication	D1	Presentation formats and analytical outputs
D2	Factors impacting quality of communication	D2	Communication principles
D3	Communication skills	D1 D2	Presentation formats and analytical outputs Communication principles
E1	Ethical considerations	C4 D2 D3	Bias and limitations Communication principles Review and improve communication of analytical output
E2	Legal considerations	D3	Review and improve communication of analytical output
E3	Sustainability considerations	D3	Review and improve communication of analytical output

More information about synoptic assessment in these qualifications can be found in Section 4.2 Synoptic assessment.

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3.3.2 Unit F018 Application of cyber security

Unit aim

Cyber security is essential for protecting digital systems, services and information from threats that can affect organisations, users and operations. Understanding how security controls are implemented, how potential threats are identified, and how concerns are managed and escalated is important for anyone involved in supporting secure digital environments.

In this unit you will learn how security controls are used to protect digital systems and services, and how security-related information can be monitored and interpreted to identify potential cyber security concerns. You will learn how cyber threats are recognised, how risks and impacts are assessed, and how appropriate protective actions are selected and applied. You will also learn how to record observations, communicate concerns and escalate potential cyber security incidents in line with defined procedures.

Topic A: Identify cyber security concerns	
Teaching content	**Exemplification**
1 Security monitoring 1.1 Sources of system information 1.1.1 System logs 1.1.2 Monitoring dashboards 1.1.3 Alert notifications 1.1.4 Account activity records 1.2 Baseline system behaviour 1.2.1 Expected system behaviour 1.2.2 User activity patterns 1.2.3 System performance patterns 1.3 Automated and AI-enabled monitoring 1.3.1 Network activity information 1.3.2 Security monitoring outputs	To include: • How system logs, account activity records, alerts, dashboards and network information are used to identify potential cyber security concerns • How to interpret baseline, expected and user activity patterns to identify deviations, anomalous behaviour and potential threats • The role, benefits and limitations of automated and AI-enabled monitoring, including the need to validate alerts before acting • How to review security-related information to identify slow response times, repeated errors, failed updates and connectivity interruptions, and what these indicate about system quality • How to use log files, monitoring dashboards and system alerts to view and interpret security-related information

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Topic A: Identify cyber security concerns	
Teaching content	**Exemplification**
2 Identifying cyber security concerns 2.1 Security vulnerabilities 2.1.1 Authentication vulnerabilities 2.1.2 Software vulnerabilities 2.1.3 Configuration vulnerabilities 2.1.4 Data protection vulnerabilities 2.2 Indicators of potential compromise 2.2.1 Unexpected activity 2.2.2 Anomalous behaviour 2.2.3 Security alerts and failures 2.3 Potential business and operational impacts 2.4 Automated and AI-enabled detection systems 2.4.1 Evidence gathering and recording observations	To include: • How potential vulnerabilities can contribute to cyber security concerns • How vulnerabilities, threats and risks contribute to potential cyber security concerns • How to identify indicators of compromise through unexpected activity, anomalous behaviour, security alerts and other security-related information) • How to consider the potential impact of cyber security concerns on users, systems, services and organisational operations • How to interpret outputs from automated and AI-enabled detection systems, including validating concerns and distinguishing genuine threats from false positives • How to record observations and evidence accurately to support investigation, reporting and escalation activities. Examples of **authentication vulnerabilities** may include: • Weak authentication • Inadequate account protection • Examples of **software vulnerabilities** may include: • Unpatched software • Unsupported software Examples of **configuration vulnerabilities** may include: • Misconfigured access permissions • Exposed network services

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Topic A: Identify cyber security concerns	
Teaching content	**Exemplification**
	Examples of **data protection vulnerabilities** may include: • Insecure file handling • Unencrypted data Examples of **indicators of potential compromise** may include: • Failed authentication attempts • Unexpected account activity • Repeated security alerts • Unexpected configuration changes • Unexpected software activity • Unusual access patterns • Unusual network traffic • System performance anomalies

Topic B: Interpret cyber security information	
Teaching content	**Exemplification**
1 Interpretation of cyber security concerns 1.1 System activity 1.2 Security-related information 1.3 Potential cyber security concerns 1.4 Interpretation considerations 1.4.1 Evidence 1.4.2 Context 1.4.3 Confidence levels 1.4.4 False positives 1.4.5 False negatives 1.4.6 Professional judgement 1.5 Automated and AI-enabled detection systems 1.5.1 Alert outputs 1.5.2 Detection confidence	To include: • The relationship between system activity, security-related information and potential cyber security concerns • How to interpret evidence and context to determine whether activity represents a genuine concern, including consideration of false positives, false negatives and uncertainty • How to apply professional judgement when reviewing automated detection outputs and security-related information • How to consider affected users, systems, services and operational significance when determining investigation and escalation requirements

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Topic B: Interpret cyber security information	
Teaching content	**Exemplification**
1.5.3 System limitations 1.6 Potential operational significance 1.6.1 Affected users 1.6.2 Affected systems 1.6.3 Affected services	• How to record and justify interpretation decisions using available evidence
2 Impacts of cyber threats 2.1 Data loss or theft 2.1.1 Destruction 2.1.2 Corruption 2.1.3 Disclosure of information 2.2 Financial loss 2.3 System disruption 2.3.1 Denial of Service (DoS) 2.3.2 Unavailable systems and services 2.3.3 Reduced productivity 2.3.4 Business continuity disruption 2.4 Reputational damage 2.4.1 Customer impact 2.5 Legal and compliance impacts 2.6 Elevation of privilege	To include: • How cyber threats can affect the confidentiality, integrity and availability of systems, services and data • How to consider the operational, financial, legal, compliance and reputational consequences of cyber security incidents • How the delayed identification and escalation of different types of cyber threats impacts organisations • How to evaluate the impact of cyber security incidents on users, customers, productivity, business continuity and organisational operations • How to apply impact information to support risk assessment, prioritisation and escalation decisions
3 Risk assessment and prioritisation 3.1 Risk assessment 3.1.1 Risk identification 3.1.2 Risk analysis 3.1.3 Risk evaluation • Impact • Operational significance 3.2 Risk matrix 3.2.1 Impact 3.2.2 Likelihood 3.2.3 Risk score	To include: • The purpose of risk assessments, including risk identification, analysis and evaluation • How to create risk assessments including risk identification, analysis and evaluation • How to use information from risk assessments to create risk matrices • How to use a risk matrix to identify, analyse, evaluate and prioritise cyber security risks

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Topic B: Interpret cyber security information	
Teaching content	**Exemplification**
3.2.4 Severity 3.2.5 Priority 3.3 Decision-making considerations 3.3.1 Professional judgement 3.3.2 Evidence-based decision making 3.3.3 Uncertainty in interpretation 3.4 Organisational considerations 3.4.1 Affected users 3.4.2 Affected systems 3.4.3 Affected services 3.4.4 Business continuity 3.4.5 Operational impact	• How to interpret evidence to assess risk and justify decisions • How to consider affected users, systems, services, business continuity and operational requirements when prioritising concerns. • How to apply professional judgement where information is incomplete or uncertain
4 Escalation and communication considerations 4.1 Escalation procedures 4.1.1 Level 4.1.2 Thresholds 4.1.3 Reporting routes 4.2 Communication considerations 4.2.1 Technical audiences 4.2.2 Non-technical audiences 4.2.3 Communication methods 4.3 Information handling requirements 4.3.1 Privacy 4.3.2 Confidentiality 4.3.3 Security-related information 4.4 Organisational considerations 4.4.1 Severity of concern 4.4.2 Potential impact 4.4.3 Organisational procedures	To include: • The escalation and communication considerations when managing cyber security concerns • How to apply escalation procedures when reporting concerns • How to escalate potential cyber security concerns in line with organisational procedures • How to communicate potential security concerns clearly to others • How to handle security-related information in line with policies and procedures for privacy and confidentiality Examples of **communication methods** may include: • Verbal communication • Written communication • Incident reports • Digital communication channels

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Topic C: Recommend security improvements	
Teaching content	**Exemplification**
1 Protective actions and security improvements 1.1 Security controls 1.1.1 Preventative controls 1.1.2 Detective controls 1.1.3 Corrective controls 1.2 Authentication 1.3 Access control 1.4 Data protection measures 1.5 Update procedures 1.6 Security policies and practices 1.6.1 Authorised use 1.6.2 Acceptable use	To include: • How authentication, access control, updates and data protection measures are used to protect systems, services and information • How security policies and practices, including authorised use and acceptable use requirements, support the secure use of systems, services and information • The role of preventative, detective and corrective security controls in protecting systems and information • The relationship between authentication strength, usability, least privilege and security risk • How to interpret the role of preventative, detective and corrective controls in reducing vulnerabilities and cyber security risks • How security controls, user behaviour and system vulnerabilities influence organisational security • How to apply appropriate security controls to mitigate identified vulnerabilities and risks Examples of **authentication methods** may include: • Password-based authentication • Multi-factor authentication (MFA) • Two-factor authentication (2FA) • Biometric authentication • Single sign-on (SSO) Examples of **access control measures** may include: • User accounts • User roles

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Topic C: Recommend security improvements	
Teaching content	**Exemplification**
	• Group permissions • Access permissions • User access monitoring • Least privilege Examples of **data protection measures** may include: • Encryption • Secure storage and backup • Data access restrictions Examples of **update procedures** may include: • Software updates • Security updates • Patch management
2. Configuration and improvement considerations 2.1 Configuration requirements 2.1.1 User account settings 2.1.2 Access permissions 2.1.3 Connectivity setting 2.1.4 Storage settings 2.1.5 Security settings 2.2 Configuration management 2.2.1 Configuration consistency 2.2.2 System behaviour 2.3 Improvement considerations 2.3.1 Workplace requirements 2.3.2 User needs 2.3.3 Identified risks 2.4 Security decision making 2.4.1 Performance 2.4.2 Usability 2.4.3 Security 2.4.4 Trade-offs	To include • How configuration requirements relate to user accounts, access permissions, connectivity, storage and security settings • How configuration settings influence system behaviour, security and operational effectiveness • How to apply configuration settings consistently across systems and users, in line with organisational requirements • How to apply authentication requirements, access controls, update procedures and data protection measures to digital systems • How to apply configuration actions relating to user accounts, permissions and security settings in line with defined organisational procedures • How to apply procedures for secure access, authentication and system use

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Topic C: Recommend security improvements	
Teaching content	**Exemplification**
	• How to select and apply protective actions to systems in response to identified risks and system information • How to evaluate configuration decisions against workplace requirements, user needs, identified risks and available evidence • How to consider trade-offs between performance, usability and security when recommending improvements Examples of **connectivity requirements** may include: • Network connectivity • Remote connectivity Examples of **storage requirements** may include: • Storage allocation • Storage access controls

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Marking criteria

The tables below give the marking criteria for the tasks in the set assignment for this unit.

Section 5.4 provides full information on how to assess the NEA units and apply the marking criteria.

The command words used in the marking criteria are defined in Appendix A.

<table>
<tr><td>Task 1a</td><td colspan="3">Interpret expected and unexpected system behaviour and activities [AO1x1, AO2x5]</td></tr>
<tr><td>Response level</td><td>Mark</td><td colspan="2">Marking Criteria</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Mark Band 1</td><td>1</td><td>Just:</td><td>One example of expected and unexpected system behaviour or activity is included with limited interpretation.</td></tr>
<tr><td>2</td><td>Secure:</td><td>More than one example of expected and unexpected system behaviour or activity is included with limited interpretation.</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Mark Band 2</td><td>3</td><td>Just:</td><td>More than one example of expected and unexpected system behaviour or activity is included with clear interpretation.</td></tr>
<tr><td>4</td><td>Secure:</td><td>Most of the main examples of expected and unexpected system behaviour or activities are included with clear interpretation.</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Mark Band 3</td><td>5</td><td>Just:</td><td>Most of the main examples of expected and unexpected system behaviour or activities are included with comprehensive interpretation.</td></tr>
<tr><td>6</td><td>Secure:</td><td>All relevant examples of expected and unexpected system behaviour or activities are included with comprehensive interpretation.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">Assessment guidance:
Students must record observations clearly and accurately.
For each mark band students must interpret the required number of expected and unexpected system behaviours or activity.
Students could use content from Topics A1 and A2.</td></tr>
</table>

If your work does not meet Mark Band 1 criteria, you will be awarded zero marks for this task.

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Task 1b	**Interpret** indicators of potential compromise, cyber security concerns and the potential business and operational impacts. [AO1x1, AO2x5] (**S**)		
Response level	**Mark**	**Marking Criteria**	
Mark Band 1	**1**	**Just:**	**One** indicator of potential compromise **and** cyber security concern is interpreted with **limited** consideration of impact.
	2	**Secure:**	**More than one** indicator of potential compromise **and** cyber security concern is interpreted with **limited** consideration of impact.
Mark Band 2	**3**	**Just:**	**More than one** indicator of potential compromise **and** cyber security concern is interpreted with **clear** consideration of impacts.
	4	**Secure:**	**Most** of the **main** indicators of potential compromise **and** cyber security concerns are interpreted with **clear** consideration of impacts.
Mark Band 3	**5**	**Just:**	**Most** of the **main i**ndicators of potential compromise **and** cyber security concerns are interpreted with **comprehensive** consideration of impacts. (**S**)
	6	**Secure:**	**All relevant i**ndicators of potential compromise **and** cyber security concerns are interpreted with **comprehensive** consideration of impacts. (**S**)

Assessment guidance:

- For each mark band students **must** interpret the required number of indicators of potential compromise **and** cyber security concerns.
- Students need to draw on knowledge and understanding from across the course of study in order to achieve mark band 3. (**S**)
- Students **could** use content from Topics A1, A2 and F015 Topic B.

If your work does not meet Mark Band 1 criteria, you will be awarded zero marks for this task.

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Task 2: Assessment guidance:

- Students **must** create a risk assessment that assesses the cyber security concerns identified in Task 1.
- Students **must** assess each cyber security concern identified in the created risk assessment using a risk matrix.
- Students **must** consider likelihood, impact on systems, data and the organisation, risk score, severity and priority level.
- Students **could** use the risk matrix format from Topic B3 or another risk matrix format they have been taught.

Task 2a	**Create** a risk assessment that includes identification, analysis and evaluation of the cyber security concerns. [AO1x1, AO2x5]		
Response level	**Mark**	**Marking Criteria**	
Mark Band 1	**1**	**Just:**	**One** cyber security concern is identified, analysed and evaluated with **limited** accuracy.
	2	**Secure:**	**More than one** cyber security concern is identified, analysed and evaluated with **limited** accuracy.
Mark Band 2	**3**	**Just:**	**More than one** cyber security concern is identified, analysed and evaluated with **partial** accuracy.
	4	**Secure:**	**Most** of the **main** cyber security concerns are identified, analysed and evaluated with **partial** accuracy.
Mark Band 3	**5**	**Just:**	**Most of the main** cyber security concerns are identified, analysed and evaluated with **complete** accuracy.
	6	**Secure:**	**All relevant** cyber security concerns are identified, analysed and evaluated with **complete** accuracy.
Assessment guidance: • Students **could** use content from Topics B1, B2 and B3.			

If your work does not meet Mark Band 1 criteria, you will be awarded zero marks for this task.

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Task 2b	**Assess** each concern using a risk matrix, concluding on impact, likelihood, risk score, severity and priority level. [AO1x1, AO2.x2, AO3x3]		
Response level	**Mark**	**Marking Criteria**	
Mark Band 1	**1**	**Just:**	**One** cyber security concern is assessed for impact, likelihood, risk score, severity and priority level with **limited** accuracy.
	2	**Secure:**	**More than one** cyber security concern is assessed for impact, likelihood, risk score, severity and priority level with **limited** accuracy.
Mark Band 2	**3**	**Just:**	**More than one** cyber security concern is assessed for impact, likelihood, risk score, severity and priority level with **partial** accuracy.
	4	**Secure:**	**Most** of the **main** cyber security concerns are assessed for impact, likelihood, risk score, severity and priority level with **partial** accuracy.
Mark Band 3	**5**	**Just:**	**Most** of the **main** cyber security concerns are assessed for impact, likelihood, risk score, severity and priority level with **complete** accuracy.
	6	**Secure:**	**All relevant** cyber security concerns are assessed for impact, likelihood, risk score, severity and priority level with **complete** accuracy.
Assessment guidance: • Students **must** assess the impact, likelihood, risk score, severity and priority level of each cyber security concern. • Students **could** use content from Topics B1, B2 and B3.			

If your work does not meet Mark Band 1 criteria, you will be awarded zero marks for this task.

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Task 2c	**Assess** each concern to conclude if escalation is required [AO1x1, AO3x2]		
Response level	**Mark**	**Marking Criteria**	
Mark Band 1	**1**	**Secure:**	**One** cyber security concern is assessed following escalation procedures with **limited** accuracy.
Mark Band 2	**2**	**Secure:**	**Some** of the **main** cyber security concerns are assessed following escalation procedures with **partial** accuracy.
Mark Band 3	**3**	**Secure:**	**All relevant** cyber security concerns are assessed following escalation procedures with **complete** accuracy.
Assessment guidance: • Students **must** apply the escalation procedures provided within the scenario. • Students **could** use content from Topic B4.			

If your work does not meet Mark Band 1 criteria, you will be awarded zero marks for this task.

Task 2d	**Justify** your decisions using the available evidence [AO3x6]		
Response level	**Mark**	**Marking Criteria**	
Mark Band 1	**1**	**Just:**	**One** decision with **limited** justification.
	2	**Secure:**	**More than one** decision with **limited** justification.
Mark Band 2	**3**	**Just:**	**More than one** decision with **clear** justification.
	4	**Secure:**	**Most** of the **main** decisions with **clear** justification.
Mark Band 3	**5**	**Just:**	**Most** of the **main** decisions with **detailed** justification.
	6	**Secure:**	**All** decisions with **detailed** justification.
Assessment guidance: • Students **must** justify decisions based on their risk assessment, risk matrix and escalation decisions. • Students **could** use content from Topics B1, B2, B3 and B4.			

If your work does not meet Mark Band 1 criteria, you will be awarded zero marks for this task.

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Task 2e	**Communicate** your findings [AO2x3] (**S**)		
Response level	**Mark**	**Marking Criteria**	
Mark Band 1	**1**	**Secure:**	Findings are communicated with **minimal** consideration of audience requirements, privacy and confidentiality.
Mark Band 2	**2**	**Secure:**	Findings are communicated with **partial** consideration of audience requirements, privacy and confidentiality. (**S**)
Mark Band 3	**3**	**Secure:**	Findings are communicated with **full** consideration of audience requirements, privacy and confidentiality. (**S**)

Assessment guidance:

- Students **must** communicate findings using a method(s) which are appropriate for the audience identified in the scenario.
- Students **must** handle security-related information in line with policies and procedures for privacy and confidentiality.
- Students need to draw on knowledge and understanding from across the course of study in order to achieve mark bands 2 and 3. (**S**)
- Students **could** use content from Topic B4, F016 Topics D and E.

If your work does not meet Mark Band 1 criteria, you will be awarded zero marks for this task.

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Task 3: Assessment guidance:

- Students **must** provide evidence of applying their recommended protective actions and security improvements within a digital system or digital environment. Evidence of practical application **must** be supported by photos, videos and/or other evidence together with a completed Teacher Observation Record (TOR).
- The protective actions and security improvements do not need to be completed using the systems described in the scenario. Centres **could** use alternative digital systems, platforms or environments that allow students to provide sufficient evidence.
- Protective actions and security improvements must include:
  - Authentication and secure access measures
  - User account, permission or security setting configurations
  - System maintenance or update procedures
  - Data protection or access control measures.
- An individualised Teacher Observation Record (TOR) **must** be completed for each student and signed by both the student and teacher. The TOR **must** confirm the practical activities completed and how the student applied the required security measures and procedures.
- Before completing practical activities, students **must** be informed of relevant health and safety, security and acceptable use procedures. Teachers **must** intervene where there is a health and safety or security risk and reflect any required intervention in the assessment evidence.

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Task 3a	**Recommend** protective actions and security improvements in response to the cyber security concerns interpreted in Task 1 and assessed in Task 2. [AO1x1 AO3x5]		
Response level	**Mark**	**Marking Criteria**	
Mark Band 1	**1**	**Just:**	**One** protective action and security improvement is recommended with **limited** appropriateness.
	2	**Secure:**	**More than one** protective action and security improvement is recommended with **limited** appropriateness.
Mark Band 2	**3**	**Just:**	**More than one** protective action and security improvements is recommended with **clear** appropriateness.
	4	**Secure:**	**Most** protective actions and security improvements are recommended with **clear** appropriateness.
Mark Band 3	**5**	**Just:**	**Most** protective actions and security improvements are recommended with **complete** appropriateness.
	6	**Secure:**	**All appropriate** protective actions and security improvements are recommended with **complete** appropriateness.
Assessment guidance: • Students **could** use content from Topic C1.			

If your work does not meet Mark Band 1 criteria, you will be awarded zero marks for this task.

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Task 3b	**Justify** your recommendations using the available evidence and risk assessment findings. [AO3x6]		
Response level	**Mark**	**Marking Criteria**	
Mark Band 1	**1**	**Just:**	**One** recommendation with **limited** justification.
	2	**Secure:**	**More than one** recommendation with **limited** justification.
Mark Band 2	**3**	**Just:**	**More than one** recommendation with **partial** justification.
	4	**Secure:**	**Most** recommendations with **partial** justification.
Mark Band 3	**5**	**Just:**	**Most** recommendations with **detailed** justification.
	6	**Secure:**	**All** recommendations with **detailed** justification.
Assessment guidance: • Justifications **must** include consideration of risk assessment findings, organisational requirements, security, usability and performance. • Students **could** use content from Topic C1.			

If your work does not meet Mark Band 1 criteria, you will be awarded zero marks for this task.

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Task 3c	**Apply** recommended security controls and protection measures [AO1x1 AO2x5]		
Response level	**Mark**	**Marking Criteria**	
Mark Band 1	**1**	**Just:**	**Two** recommended security controls or protection measures are applied with **limited** effectiveness.
	2	**Secure:**	**More than two** recommended security controls or protection measures are applied with **limited** effectiveness.
Mark Band 2	**3**	**Just:**	**More than two** recommended security controls **and** protection measures are applied with **clear** effectiveness.
	4	**Secure:**	**Most** recommended security controls **and** protection measures are applied with **clear** effectiveness.
Mark Band 3	**5**	**Just:**	**Most** recommended security controls **and** protection measures are applied with **complete** effectiveness.
	6	**Secure:**	**All** recommended security controls **and** protection measures are applied with **complete** effectiveness.

Assessment guidance:

- To achieve mark band 1, students must recommend the required number of **either** security controls **or** protection measures or the required number across both. For mark bands 2 and 3, students must recommend the required number of **both** security controls **and** protection measures.
- Students **must:**
  - Apply recommendations relating to security controls to address identified vulnerabilities and risks.
  - Apply data protection measures to protect systems and information.
  - Apply update procedures to maintain system security.
  - Configure security settings in accordance with organisational requirements.

If your work does not meet Mark Band 1 criteria, you will be awarded zero marks for this task.

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Task 3d	**Apply** recommended procedures for secure access, authentication and system use [AO1x1 AO2x5]		
Response level	**Mark**	**Marking Criteria**	
Mark Band 1	**1**	**Just:**	**Two** procedures relating to secure access, authentication **or** system use are applied with **limited** success.
	2	**Secure:**	**More than two** procedures relating to secure access, authentication **or** system use are applied with **limited** success.
Mark Band 2	**3**	**Just:**	**More than two** procedures relating to secure access, authentication **and** system use are applied with **clear** success.
	4	**Secure:**	**Most** procedures relating to secure access, authentication and system use are applied with **clear** success.
Mark Band 3	**5**	**Just:**	**Most** procedures relating to secure access, authentication and system use are applied with **complete** success.
	6	**Secure:**	**All relevant** procedures relating to secure access, authentication and system use are applied with **complete** success.

Assessment guidance:

- For mark band 1, students must apply the required number of procedures and these can relate to any combination of secure access, authentication **or** system use. For mark bands 2 and 3, students must apply the required number of procedures which must cover all three areas of secure access, authentication **and** system use.
- Students **must**:
  - Create and manage user accounts in accordance with organisational requirements.
  - Apply authentication requirements to user accounts.
  - Configure user permissions to support authorised access.
  - Apply secure access procedures when accessing systems and services.
  - Apply authorised and acceptable use requirements during system use.

If your work does not meet Mark Band 1 criteria, you will be awarded zero marks for this task.

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Synoptic assessment

Some of the knowledge, understanding and skills needed to complete this unit will draw on the learning in Unit F015: Digital systems and security and, Unit F016: Digital solution design and communication.

This table details these synoptic links.

Unit F015: Digital systems and security		**Unit F018: Application of cyber security**	
Topic		**Topic**	
A3	Network infrastructure components	C2	Configuration and improvement considerations
A4	Operating systems and access management	C1 C2	Protective actions and security improvements Configuration and improvement considerations
B1	Vulnerabilities	B1	Identifying cyber security concerns
B2	Common cyber security risks and threats	B1 B2	Identifying cyber security concerns Impacts of cyber threats
B3	Impact on systems, users and organisations	B2	Impacts of cyber threats
C4	System diagnostics	A1 B1	Security monitoring Interpretation of cyber security concerns
D2	Protection of personal and sensitive information	B4	Escalation and communication considerations
D3	Privacy and confidentiality	B4	Escalation and communication considerations
D4	System integrity and availability	B2	Impacts of cyber threats
D5	Legal and ethical responsibilities	B4 C1	Escalation and communication considerations Protective actions and security improvements

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Unit F016: Digital solution design and communication		**Unit F018: Application of cyber security**	
Topic		**Topic**	
B1	Digital system requirements	C2	Configuration and improvement considerations
B3	Design constraints	C2	Configuration and improvement considerations
C2	Automated and AI-enabled decision making	B1	Interpretation of cyber security concerns
C3	Human oversight of automated and AI-enabled systems	B1	Interpretation of cyber security concerns
C4	Prompts and structured inputs for automated and AI-enabled systems	B2 C3 C4	Analytical techniques and systems Confidence in findings Bias and limitations
C5	Generated outputs from automated and AI-enabled systems	A2 B1	Identifying cyber security concerns Interpretation of cyber security concerns
D1	Methods of communication	B4	Escalation and communication considerations
D2	Factors impacting quality of communication	B4	Escalation and communication considerations
D3	Communication skills	B4	Escalation and communication considerations

More information about synoptic assessment in these qualifications can be found in Section 4.2 Synoptic assessment.

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3.3.3 Unit F019 Implementing digital systems

Unit aim

The ability to prepare, configure and test digital systems to meet both system requirements from the client and user needs is essential to ensuring technology is secure, reliable and fit for purpose. Organisations rely on digital practitioners to interpret requirements, configure and secure digital systems, evaluate performance and identify issues that may affect users, services or system operation.

In this unit you will learn how to interpret user and system requirements, safely prepare and configure digital systems, and apply secure and responsible configuration practices. You will learn how to test and evaluate systems against defined requirements, review system behaviour and performance, identify and resolve configuration issues, and communicate configuration decisions, test outcomes and recommendations. This learning and assessment could take place in realistic, controlled, non-live or simulated digital environments, where appropriate.

Topic A: Plan digital systems	
Teaching content	**Exemplification**
1 Digital system requirements 1.1 Client and end-user requirements 1.1.1 Client requirements 1.1.2 End-user requirements 1.2 System requirements 1.2.1 Functionality 1.2.2 Usability 1.3 Security requirements 1.3.1 Access control 1.3.2 Authentication 1.3.3 Data protection 1.3.4 Security monitoring 1.4 Performance requirements 1.4 .1 Availability 1.4.2 Response time 1.4.3 Capacity 1.5 Testing requirements 1.5.1 Scope of testing 1.5.2 Success criteria	To include: • How client, end-user and system requirements influence planning, system preparation, configuration and testing • How functionality, usability, security, performance requirements define successful system implementation • How to interpret client, end-user and system requirements to determine configuration needs, and the scope and focus of testing

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Topic A: Plan digital systems	
Teaching content	**Exemplification**
2 Workplace policies and procedures 2.1 Workplace policies 2.1.1 Data protection 2.1.2 Privacy 2.1.3 Acceptable use 2.1.4 Quality assurance expectations 2.2 Workplace procedures 2.2.1 Configuration 2.2.2 Testing	To include: • How workplace policies and procedures influence planning, configurating and testing of digital systems • How to apply workplace policies relating to data protection, privacy, acceptable use and quality assurance expectations to digital systems • How to follow workplace procedures when planning, configuring and testing digital systems • How to apply policies relating to configuration and data protection requirements

Topic B: Prepare and configure digital systems	
Teaching content	**Exemplification**
1 Digital system preparation 1.1 System dependencies 1.1.1 Hardware 1.1.2 Software 1.1.3 Network 1.1.4 Security 1.1.5 Data 1.1.6 Cloud 1.2 Component compatibility 1.2.1 Hardware 1.2.2 Software 1.2.3 Network 1.2.4 Peripheral 1.3 Component configuration 1.3.1 Hardware 1.3.2 Software	To include: • How system dependencies and component compatibility support reliable system operation • How client and end-user requirements influence preparation and configuration decisions • How to prepare digital systems by considering hardware, software, network, security, data and cloud dependencies • How to prepare digital systems to meet defined requirements

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Topic B: Prepare and configure digital systems	
Teaching content	**Exemplification**
1.3.3 Network 1.3.4 User accounts and permissions 1.3.5 Security settings and controls 1.3.6 Data and storage requirements	
2 Configuration environments and tools 2.1 Test environments 2.1.1 Controlled 2.1.2 Non-live 2.1.3 Simulated 2.2 Training environments 2.2.1 User training 2.2.2 Configuration practice 2.3 Digital tools 2.3.1 Configuration 2.3.2 Monitoring and diagnostic 2.3.3 User account management 2.3.4 Remote management	To include • The purpose of test and training environments when configuring systems • How digital tools support configuration, monitoring and management activities • How to select appropriate environments and tools to support safe and effective implementation
3 Configuration settings 3.1 User access 3.1.1 User accounts 3.1.2 Permissions 3.1.3 Authentication • Password-based authentication • Multi-factor authentication (MFA)/ 2 factor authentication (2FA) 3.2 Connectivity 3.2.1 Network access 3.2.2 Remote access 3.3 Storage 3.3.1 Capacity 3.3.2 Availability	To include: • How configuration settings relating to user access, authentication, connectivity, storage, cloud services, accessibility and security affect system operation and user experience • How storage capacity and availability affect system operation, including the allocation of sufficient storage resources and ensuring information remains accessible to authorised users when needed • The relationship between usability, accessibility, performance, security and system integrity

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Topic B: Prepare and configure digital systems	
Teaching content	**Exemplification**
3.4 Security setting and controls 3.4.1 Firmware/software update management 3.4.2 Access control settings 3.4.3 Device hardening 3.5 Accessibility 3.5.1 Display 3.5.2 Input 3.5.3 Audio 3.5.4 Navigation 3.5.5 User support 3.6 Environment and sustainability considerations 3.6.1 Energy efficiency 3.6.2 Device lifecycle 3.6.3 Data storage and backup efficiency 3.6.4 Cloud and virtualisation 3.7 System integrity 3.7.1 Reliable operation 3.7.2 Configuration consistency	• How to apply responsible, secure and inclusive configuration practices that support diverse users and organisational requirements • How to consider sustainability, resource utilisation and efficient use of digital resources when configuring systems • How to configure digital systems to meet defined needs • How to adjust configuration settings relating to user access, connectivity, storage and security to support system functionality and accessibility • How to maintain system integrity through responsible configuration practices, updates, permissions and security settings
4 Document and communicate configuration decisions 4.1 Configuration decisions 4.1.1 Changes made 4.1.2 Reasons for changes 4.2 Stakeholder communication 4.2.1 Technical audiences 4.2.2 Non-technical audiences 4.2.3 User queries	To include • The importance of documenting configuration decisions and changes made • How to document configuration decisions clearly • How to communicate configuration outcomes clearly and respond to queries in line with workplace procedures

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Topic C: Test and maintain digital systems	
Teaching content	**Exemplification**
1 Digital system testing 1.1 Categories 1.1.1 Functionality 1.1.2 Performance 1.1.3 Usability 1.1.4 Accessibility 1.1.5 Security-related behaviours 1.2 Testing process 1.2.1 Planning 1.2.2 Execution 1.2.3 Result recording 1.2.4 Comparison of expected and observed outcomes 1.2.5 Retesting	To include: • The purpose of testing to assure the quality and maintenance of system performance, security, and service reliability • How to carry out structured tests to confirm system functionality, performance, stability and security-related behaviours • How to assess system usability and accessibility against stated user needs • How to record and compare test outcomes against requirements using accurate terminology and structured formats
2 Digital system behaviours and fault finding 2.1 System review 2.1.1 Expected outcomes • Behaviour • Outputs 2.1.2 Observed outcomes • Behaviour • Outputs 2.2 System information 2.2.1 System logs 2.2.2 Activity logs 2.2.3 Alerts • Automated • Monitoring 2.2.4 Performance indicators • Response times • Error rates • System availability • System uptime	To include • How system behaviour is assessed by comparing expected and observed outcomes • How to interpret logs, alerts and performance indicators, including availability, uptime, capacity utilisation and resource consumption, to identify issues and support fault diagnosis • How to apply structured fault-finding approaches to identify recurring issues, performance concerns and configuration problems • How to review system behaviour and outputs to identify deviations from expected outcomes and apply structured fault-finding approaches where required • How to identify and correct configuration settings that do not meet defined user requirements Examples of **resource consumption** may include:

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Topic C: Test and maintain digital systems	
Teaching content	**Exemplification**
• Capacity utilisation • Resource consumption 2.3 Patterns and recurring issues 2.4 Fault identification 2.4.1 Deviations from expected outcomes 2.4.2 Configuration issues 2.4.3 Functional issues 2.4.4 Performance issues 2.4.5 Security-related issues	• CPU usage • Memory usage • Storage usage • Network usage Examples of **patterns and recurring issues** may include: • Trends • Repeated failures • Recurring faults
3 Digital system evaluation criteria 3.1 Reliability 3.1.1 Consistent operation 3.1.2 Availability 3.2 Usability 3.2.1 Ease of use 3.2.2 Efficiency 3.3 Accessibility 3.3.1 Inclusive access 3.3.2 Assistive technology support 3.4 Security 3.4.1 Secure authentication 3.4.2 Access controls 3.4.3 Security warnings 3.5 Service continuity 3.5.1 Service availability 3.5.2 Reduced disruption 3.6 User productivity	To include: • The impact of system performance, reliability and security issues on user experience, productivity and service continuity • How to consider trade-offs between usability, accessibility, performance, reliability and security • How to assess system usability and accessibility against stated end-user requirements • How to evaluate test outcomes in relation to defined requirements to determine whether systems are ready for use or require further adjustment • How to make recommendations based on evaluation of outcomes
4 Digital system routine checks 4.1 End-user access and authentication 4.2 Connectivity and network access 4.3 Storage availability	To include: • The importance of routine checks in supporting system integrity, availability and reliability

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Topic C: Test and maintain digital systems	
Teaching content	**Exemplification**
4.4 Software updates and security settings 4.5 Expected system functionality and performance	• How to apply routine checks to confirm systems are ready for use
5 Digital tools for testing 5.1 Test support tools 5.1.1 Test management tools • Test plans • Test cases • Test objectives and scope • Defect and issue records • Test history and audit trails 5.1.2 Test execution tools 5.2 Monitoring tools 5.2.1 Dashboards 5.2.2 Monitoring systems 5.3 Automated and AI-enabled tools 5.3.1 Configuration support 5.3.2 Testing 5.3.3 Pattern identification 5.3.4 Findings summarisation	To include • How digital tools support test planning, test execution, monitoring and reporting activities • The role of automated and AI-enabled tools in identifying patterns, supporting analysis and summarising findings • How to evaluate outputs from automated and AI-enabled systems to ensure accuracy, reliability and suitability • How to use testing tools to support system evaluation and improvement

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Marking criteria

The table below gives the marking criteria for the tasks in the set assignment for this unit.

Section 5.4 provides full information on how to assess the NEA units and apply the marking criteria.

The command words used in the marking criteria are defined in Appendix A.

Task 1a	**Explain** the client and end-user requirements [AO1x2, AO2x4]		
Response level	**Mark**	**Marking Criteria**	
Mark Band 1	**1**	**Just:**	**One** client **and** end-user requirement with **limited** explanation.
	2	**Secure:**	**Two** client **and** end-user requirement with **limited** explanation.
Mark Band 2	**3**	**Just:**	**Two** client **and** end-user requirements with **clear** explanation.
	4	**Secure:**	**More than two** client **and** end-user requirements with **clear** explanation.
Mark Band 3	**5**	**Just:**	**Most** of the client **and** end-user requirements with **detailed** explanation.
	6	**Secure:**	**All relevant** client **and** end-user requirements with **detailed** explanation.
Assessment guidance: • Students **must** explain the client and end-user requirements identified within the scenario. • For each mark band students **must** explain the required number of client **and** end-user requirements. • Students **could** use content from Topics A1 and A2.			

If your work does not meet Mark Band 1 criteria, you will be awarded zero marks for this task.

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Task 1b	**Explain** the configuration needs [AO1x1, AO2x2]		
Response level	**Mark**	**Marking Criteria**	
Mark Band 1	**1**	**Secure:**	**Two** configuration needs identified with **limited** explanation.
Mark Band 2	**2**	**Secure:**	**Most** configuration needs identified with **clear** explanation.
Mark Band 3	**3**	**Secure:**	**All relevant** configuration needs identified with **detailed** explanation.
Assessment guidance: • Stu Students **could** use content from Topics A1 and A2.			

If your work does not meet Mark Band 1 criteria, you will be awarded zero marks for this task.

Task 1c	**Explain** the scope and focus of testing [AO1x1, AO2x2]		
Response level	**Mark**	**Marking Criteria**	
Mark Band 1	**1**	**Secure:**	**One** aspect of the scope **and** focus of testing is included with **limited** explanation
Mark Band 2	**2**	**Secure:**	**More than one** aspect of the scope **and** focus of testing is included with **clear** explanation.
Mark Band 3	**3**	**Secure:**	**Most** aspects of the scope and focus of testing are included with **detailed** explanation.
Assessment guidance: • Students **must** consider testing requirements, scope of testing and success criteria. • For each mark band students, **must** explain the required number of aspects of the scope **and** focus of testing. • Students **could** use content from Topics A1 and A2.			

If your work does not meet Mark Band 1 criteria, you will be awarded zero marks for this task.

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Task 2: Assessment guidance:

- Students **must** provide evidence of them preparing and configuring the digital system. Students **could** use content from Topic B2. The form of evidence selected will vary, e.g. photos or videos of the preparation and configurations taking place and **must** be supported by a Teacher Observation Record (TOR).
- All videos and/or photos **must** clearly show the preparation and configuration activities being completed by the student.
- An individualised Teacher Observation Record (TOR) **must** be provided for each student as evidence of safely preparing and configuring the digital system. Students must also read and sign the TOR form. Each TOR form must describe how the student safely used tools and techniques when preparing and configuring the digital system and troubleshooting faults.
- It is important that students test their digital system **during** configuration so it can be reviewed in **Task 3**.
- Before students are provided with components to prepare and configure, they must be informed of all relevant health and safety policies and procedures. Teachers **must** intervene if there's a health and safety risk and reflect this in their assessment if the student needed additional help to work safely and independently to meet the assessment criteria in this task.
- We recommend that students use the test plan template provided. However, if students use a different template which is appropriate for the task, they must not be penalised for doing so.
- Teacher provided templates **must** not include examples or instructions.

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Task 2a	**Prepare** the digital system ready for configuration [AO1x1, AO2x2]		
Response level	**Mark**	**Marking Criteria**	
Mark Band 1	**1**	**Secure:**	**Two** preparation activities are completed with **limited** success.
Mark Band 2	**2**	**Secure:**	**More than two** preparation activities are completed with **clear** success.
Mark Band 3	**3**	**Secure:**	**All relevant** preparation activities are completed with **complete** success.
Assessment guidance: • For each mark band students **must** complete the required number of preparation activities. • Students **could** use content from Topic B1.			

If your work does not meet Mark Band 1 criteria, you will be awarded zero marks for this task.

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Task 2b	**Configure** user access and connectivity settings [AO1x1, AO2x5]		
Response level	**Mark**	**Marking Criteria**	
Mark Band 1	**1**	**Just:**	**One** user access **and** connectivity setting is configured with **limited** success.
	2	**Secure:**	**More than one** user access **and** connectivity setting is configured with **limited** success.
Mark Band 2	**3**	**Just:**	**More than one** user access **and** connectivity setting is configured with **partial** success.
	4	**Secure:**	**Most** of the user access **and** connectivity settings are configured with **partial** success.
Mark Band 3	**5**	**Just:**	**Most** of the user access **and** connectivity settings are configured with **complete** success.
	6	**Secure:**	**All relevant** user access **and** connectivity settings are configured with **complete** success.
Assessment guidance: • For each mark band students **must** configure the required number of access **and** connectivity settings. • Students **could** use content from Topic B3.			

If your work does not meet Mark Band 1 criteria, you will be awarded zero marks for this task.

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Task 2c	**Configure** storage settings [AO1x1, AO2x2]		
Response level	**Mark**	**Marking Criteria**	
Mark Band 1	**1**	**Secure:**	**More than one** storage setting is configured with **limited** success.
Mark Band 2	**2**	**Secure:**	**Most** of the storage settings are configured with **partial** success.
Mark Band 3	**3**	**Secure:**	**All relevant** storage settings are configured with **complete** success.
Assessment guidance: • For each mark band students **must** configure the required number of storage settings. • Students **could** use content from Topic B3.			

If your work does not meet Mark Band 1 criteria, you will be awarded zero marks for this task.

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Task 2d	**Configure** security settings and controls [AO1x1, AO2x5]		
Response level	**Mark**	**Marking Criteria**	
Mark Band 1	**1**	**Just:**	**One** security setting **and** control is configured with **limited** success.
	2	**Secure:**	**More than one** security setting **and** control is configured **limited** success.
Mark Band 2	**3**	**Just:**	**More than one** security setting **and** control is configured with **partial** success.
	4	**Secure:**	**Most** security settings **and** controls are configured with **partial** success.
Mark Band 3	**5**	**Just:**	**Most** security settings **and** controls are configured are configured with **complete** success.
	6	**Secure:**	**All relevant** security settings **and** controls are configured are configured with **complete** success.
Assessment guidance: • For each mark band students **must** configure the required number of security settings **and** controls. • Students **could** use content from Topic B3.			

If your work does not meet Mark Band 1 criteria, you will be awarded zero marks for this task.

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Task 2e	**Configure** accessibility and sustainability considerations [AO1x1, AO2x2]		
Response level	**Mark**	**Marking Criteria**	
Mark Band 1	**1**	**Secure:**	**One** accessibility **and** sustainability consideration is configured with **limited** success.
Mark Band 2	**2**	**Secure:**	**More than one** accessibility **and** sustainability consideration is configured with **partial** success.
Mark Band 3	**3**	**Secure:**	**Most** accessibility **and** sustainability considerations are configured are configured with **complete** success.

Assessment guidance:

- For each mark band students **must** configure the required number of accessibility **and** sustainability considerations.
- Students **could** use content from Topic B3.

If your work does not meet Mark Band 1 criteria, you will be awarded zero marks for this task.

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Task 2f	**Test** the digital system during configuration [AO1x1, AO2x5] (**S**)		
Response level	**Mark**	**Marking Criteria**	
Mark Band 1	**1**	**Just:**	**Two** tests are completed with **limited** detail.
	2	**Secure:**	**More than two** tests are completed with **limited** detail.
Mark Band 2	**3**	**Just:**	**More than two** tests are completed with **partial** detail. (**S**)
	4	**Secure:**	**Most categories** of testing are completed with **partial** detail. (**S**)
Mark Band 3	**5**	**Just:**	**Most categories** of testing are completed with **comprehensive** detail. (**S**)
	6	**Secure:**	**All categories** of testing are completed with **comprehensive** detail. (**S**)

Assessment guidance:

- The categories of testing are: functionality, performance, usability, accessibility and security-related behaviours.
- To achieve 1-3 marks students must complete the required number of tests. To achieve 4-6 marks, students' **must** include tests from the required number of categories of testing.
- Students need to draw on knowledge and understanding from across the course of study in order to achieve mark bands 2 and 3. (**S**)
- Students **could** use content from Topics C1, C5 and F015 Topic C.

If your work does not meet Mark Band 1 criteria, you will be awarded zero marks for this task.

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Task 2g	**Compare** the results of your testing against the configuration needs from Task 1 to identify, conclude on and correct any configuration issues [AO2x2, AO3x1]		
Response level	**Mark**	**Marking Criteria**	
Mark Band 1	**1**	**Secure:**	**More than one** issue is identified and corrected with **limited** success.
Mark Band 2	**2**	**Secure:**	**More than two** issues are identified and corrected with **partial** success.
Mark Band 3	**3**	**Secure:**	**All** issues are identified and corrected with **complete** success.
Assessment guidance: • Students **could** use content from Topic C2.			

If your work does not meet Mark Band 1 criteria, you will be awarded zero marks for this task.

Task 2h	**Compare** the results of your testing against the configuration needs from Task 1 to identify, conclude on and correct any system behaviour issues [AO2x2, AO3x1]		
Response level	**Mark**	**Marking Criteria**	
Mark Band 1	**1**	**Secure:**	**More than one** system behaviour is identified and corrected with **limited** success.
Mark Band 2	**2**	**Secure:**	**More than two** system behaviours are identified and corrected with **partial** success.
Mark Band 3	**3**	**Secure:**	**All** system behaviours are identified and corrected with **complete** success.
Assessment guidance: • Students **could** use logs, alerts, performance indicators and fault identification approaches. • Students **could** use content from Topic C2.			

If your work does not meet Mark Band 1 criteria, you will be awarded zero marks for this task.

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Task 3a	**Apply** routine checks to confirm the digital system is ready for use [AO1x1, AO2x2]		
Response level	**Mark**	**Marking Criteria**	
Mark Band 1	**1**	**Secure:**	**One** routine check is completed with **limited** success.
Mark Band 2	**2**	**Secure:**	**More than two** routine checks are completed with **partial** success.
Mark Band 3	**3**	**Secure:**	**All relevant** routine checks are completed with **complete** success.
Assessment guidance: • Students **could** use content from Topic C4.			

If your work does not meet Mark Band 1 criteria, you will be awarded zero marks for this task.

Task 3b	**Evaluate** the digital system against requirements identified in Task 1 and conclude if the requirements have been met. [AO3x6]		
Response level	**Mark**	**Marking Criteria**	
Mark Band 1	**1**	**Just:**	**Two** criteria are used to create a **limited** evaluation which concludes if the requirements have been met**.**
	2	**Secure:**	**More than two** criteria are used to create a **limited** evaluation which concludes if the requirements have been met**.**
Mark Band 2	**3**	**Just:**	**More than two** criteria are used to create a **clear** evaluation which concludes if the requirements have been met**.**
	4	**Secure:**	**Most** of the relevant criteria are used to create a **clear** evaluation which concludes if the requirements have been met**.**
Mark Band 3	**5**	**Just:**	**Most** of the relevant criteria are used to create a **detailed** evaluation which concludes if the requirements have been met**.**
	6	**Secure:**	**All relevant** criteria are used to create a **detailed** evaluation which concludes if the requirements have been met**.**

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Assessment guidance: • Students **could** use content from Topic C3.

If your work does not meet Mark Band 1 criteria, you will be awarded zero marks for this task.

Task 3c	**Explain** how you have used responsible configuration practices when configuring the digital system. [AO1x1, AO2x2]		
Response level	**Mark**	**Marking Criteria**	
Mark Band 1	**1**	**Secure:**	**Two** responsible configuration practices used with **limited** explanation.
Mark Band 2	**2**	**Secure:**	**More than two** responsible configuration practices used with **clear** explanation.
Mark Band 3	**3**	**Secure:**	**Most** responsible configuration practices used with **comprehensive** explanation.
Assessment guidance: • Students **could** consider the configurations they applied to the digital system in Task 2. • Students **could** use content from Topic B3.			

If your work does not meet Mark Band 1 criteria, you will be awarded zero marks for this task.

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Task 3d	**Document** and communicate your configuration decisions [AO2x3] (**S**)		
Response level	**Mark**	**Marking Criteria**	
Mark Band 1	**1**	**Secure:**	**Two** configuration decisions are documented **and** communicated with **limited** consideration of stakeholder communication requirements.
Mark Band 2	**2**	**Secure:**	**More than two** configuration decisions are documented **and** communicated with **partial** consideration of stakeholder communication requirements. (**S**)
Mark Band 3	**3**	**Secure:**	**Most** configuration decisions are documented **and** communicated with **complete** consideration of stakeholder communication requirements. (**S**)

Assessment guidance:

- For each mark band students **must** document the required number of configuration decisions **and** communicate them appropriately to the stakeholder in the scenario.
- Students need to draw on knowledge and understanding from across the course of study in order to achieve mark bands 2 and 3. (**S**)
- Student**s could** use content from Topic Area B4 and F016 Topic D.

If your work does not meet Mark Band 1 criteria, you will be awarded zero marks for this task.

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Synoptic assessment

Some of the knowledge, understanding and skills needed to complete this unit will draw on the learning in Unit F015: Digital systems and security and, Unit F016: Digital solution design and communication.

This table details these synoptic links.

Unit F015: Digital systems and security		**Unit F019: Implementing digital systems**	
Topic		**Topic**	
A2	Digital system components	B1	Digital system preparation
A3	Network infrastructure components	B1	Digital system preparation
A4	Operating systems and access management	B3	Configuration settings
B1	Vulnerabilities	B3	Configuration settings
B2	Common cyber security risks and threats	B3	Configuration settings
C1	Testing	C1	Digital system testing
C2	Test evaluation	C3	Digital system evaluation criteria
C3	Technical fault types	C2	Digital system behaviours and fault finding
C4	System diagnostics	C2	Digital system behaviours and fault finding
D2	Protection of personal and sensitive information	A2	Workplace policies and procedures
D3	Privacy and confidentiality	A2	Workplace policies and procedures
D4	System integrity and availability	C4	Digital system routine checks
D5	Legal and ethical responsibilities	A2	Workplace policies and procedures

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Unit F016: Digital solution design and communication		**Unit F019: Implementing digital systems**	
Topic		**Topic**	
B1	Digital system requirements	A1	Digital system requirements
B2	Methods for gathering, analysing and interpreting user requirements	A1	Digital system requirements
B3	Design constraints	A1	Digital system requirements
B4	Tools for translating requirements into digital solution designs	B1	Digital system preparation
B5	Feedback loop in development	C3	Digital system evaluation criteria
C1	Automated and AI-enabled systems	C5	Digital tools for testing
C2	Automated and AI-enabled decision making	C5	Digital tools for testing
C3	Human oversight of automated and AI-enabled systems	C5	Digital tools for testing
C4	Prompts and structured inputs for automated and AI-enabled systems	C5	Digital tools for testing
C5	Generated outputs from automated and AI-enabled systems	C5	Digital tools for testing
C6	Responsible use of automated and AI-enabled system	B3 C5	Configuration settings Digital tools for testing
D1	Methods of communication	B4	Document and communicate configuration decisions
D2	Factors impacting quality of communication	B4	Document and communicate configuration decisions
D3	Communication skills	B4	Document and communicate configuration decisions
E1	Ethical considerations	B3	Configuration settings
E3	Sustainability considerations	B3	Configuration settings

More information about synoptic assessment in these qualifications can be found in Section 4.2 Synoptic assessment.

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3.3.4 Unit F020 Developing digital solutions

Unit aim

Digital solutions may take many forms and are not limited to programmed solutions. Depending on the identified need, context and requirements, digital solutions may include websites, applications, online platforms, immersive solutions and other digital products. These may be developed using configurable, scripted, automated, low-code, block-based or other technology-enabled approaches, to meet client requirements and end-user needs. You are not required to use a particular technology, platform or programming language.

In this unit you will learn how to analyse client requirements, end-user needs, constraints and governance expectations to define problems and inform the design of the digital solution. You will learn how to plan and design digital solutions using structured approaches, including computational thinking, logic, algorithms, user-centred design principles and design documentation. You will also learn how suitable technology-enabled approaches, including configurable, scripted, automated, low-code and block-based approaches, can be used to create, refine or represent digital solutions. You will learn how to document and justify your design decisions and communicate proposed digital solutions to technical and non-technical audiences, and how testing and refinement support the development of effective digital solutions.

Topic A: Plan digital solutions	
Teaching content	**Exemplification**
1 Client, user and solution requirements 1.1 Client requirements 1.2 End-user needs 1.3 User-centred design principles 1.4 Accessibility and usability requirements 1.5 Functional and non-functional solution requirements 1.6 Intended outcomes and success measures	To include: • The purpose of analysing client requirements and end-user needs when designing digital solutions, including their relationship and influence on solution requirements, design decisions and intended outcomes • How user-centred design principles, accessibility and usability requirements influence digital solution design, including accessible presentation of information, navigation and interaction methods, compatibility with assistive technologies, and support for diverse user needs • How functional and non-functional requirements influence digital solution design, including system performance, security and privacy, and device and platform compatibility

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Topic A: Plan digital solutions	
Teaching content	**Exemplification**
	• The relationship between client requirements, end-user needs, intended outcomes, success measures and solution effectiveness, including the impact of incomplete, inaccurate or conflicting requirements and the use of success measures to evaluate solutions
2 Problem definition and solution scope 2.1 Problem analysis 2.2 Requirement analysis 2.2.1 Client requirements and end-user needs 2.2.2 Functional and non-functional requirements 2.3 Solution scope and desired outcome 2.3.1 Data requirements 2.3.2 Security requirements 2.4 Constraints 2.4.1 Technical 2.4.2 Organisational 2.4. 3 Resource 2.5 Assumptions and dependencies 2.6 Success criteria	To include: • Approaches to defining, analysing and documenting problems when developing digital solutions, including: ○ Identifying and clarifying problems ○ Considering the impact of a problem and the desired outcomes of a solution ○ Distinguishing between client requirements, end-user needs, stated requirements, underlying user needs and desired outcomes • The purpose and importance of requirements analysis when determining solution scope, including: ○ Interpreting user needs and client requirements to inform solution design ○ Distinguishing between essential and desirable features ○ Identifying and documenting solution requirements including application and integration requirements, user group requirements and access requirements • How to identify, analyse and document factors that may affect the design, development or implementation of a digital solution, including: ○ Assumptions (user behaviour, technical and business assumptions)

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Topic A: Plan digital solutions	
Teaching content	**Exemplification**
	○ Dependencies (technical, functional, business, task, resource and external dependencies) ○ Constraints (financial, time, legal, environmental and user-related constraints) • How to analyse a problem to identify inputs, outputs, constraints and success criteria • The role of success criteria in determining whether a solution meets identified requirements and intended outcomes • The role of analysis and planning in determining solution scope, managing risk and supporting successful solution development

Topic B: Design digital solutions	
Teaching content	**Exemplification**
1 Factors influencing digital solution design 1.1 Solution feasibility and structure 1.2 Design trade-offs 1.3 Functionality 1.4 Complexity 1.5 Maintainability 1.6 Workplace policies, procedures and operational constraints: 1.6.1 Accessibility and diverse user needs 1.6.2 Data protection and appropriate use of personal and sensitive information 1.6.3 Security, authentication and access controls	To include: • How requirements, assumptions, success criteria and feasibility considerations influence solution proposals, design decisions and solution effectiveness. • How functionality, complexity, maintainability and design trade-offs influence digital solution design and development. • How workplace requirements, operational constraints, responsible design principles and sustainability considerations influence digital solution design and development Examples of **workplace policies, procedures and operational constraints** may include:

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Topic B: Design digital solutions	
Teaching content	**Exemplification**
1.6.4 Responsible design, including ethical use of automated and AI enabled systems. 1.7 Sustainability considerations	• Accessibility and diverse user needs • Data protection and appropriate use of personal and sensitive information • Security, authentication and access controls • Responsible design, including ethical use of automated and AI enabled systems. Examples of **sustainability considerations** may include; • Efficient use of processing resources • Cloud resource consumption • Device lifecycle management • Reuse of digital assets • Reduction of unnecessary storage and data transfer
2 Digital solution design principles 2.1 Structured problem-solving approaches 2.1.1 Computational thinking 2.1.2 Abstraction 2.1.3 Decomposition 2.1.4 Pattern recognition 2.2 Workplace context 2.3 Automated and AI-enabled design support	To include: • How structured problem-solving techniques, including computational thinking, abstraction, decomposition and pattern recognition, support the analysis of problems and the design of reliable digital solutions • How user needs, workplace context and organisational requirements influence digital solution design, including the application of digital design principles in configurable, automated, low-code and block-based environments • How automated and AI-enabled systems support solution design and evaluation, and the need to assess the suitability, reliability and limitations of their outputs Examples of **automated and AI-enabled design support** may include: • Idea generation

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Topic B: Design digital solutions	
Teaching content	**Exemplification**
	• Solution refinement • Evaluation of solution approaches
3 Structured logic and algorithms 3.1 Inputs, processes, decisions and outputs 3.2 Structured logic 3.2.1 Sequencing 3.2.2 Selection 3.2.3 Iteration 3.3 Algorithms and logical sequence design	To include: • How structured logic, step-by-step processes and algorithms organise inputs, processes and outputs within digital solutions, including the relationship between logic structure and the predictability of outcomes • How sequencing, selection and iteration are used to represent, sequence and control solution logic within digital solutions • How algorithms and structured coding approaches are used to develop reliable and maintainable digital solutions and structure proposed digital solutions using logical steps and processes
4 User-centred design 4.1 User experience (UX) 4.1.1 User journeys 4.1.2 User goals 4.2 User interface (UI) 4.2.1 Layout 4.2.2 Navigation 4.2.3 Visual design 4.3 System behaviour 4.3.1 Confirmation 4.3.2 Feedback 4.3.3 Error handling 4.4 Accessibility and inclusive design 4.5 User behaviour and interactions	To include • How user experience (UX) and user interface (UI) design principles support usability, accessibility and effective user interaction, including the relationship between interface design, user journeys, user goals and user behaviour • How design decisions relating to layout, navigation, visual design, accessibility and inclusive design influence usability, accessibility and system behaviour in digital solutions, including accessible presentation, compatibility with assistive technologies, support for diverse user needs and alternative interaction methods. • How to design solution concepts that consider system behaviour, user interaction and accessibility, including

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Topic B: Design digital solutions	
Teaching content	**Exemplification**
	consideration of user interactions, decisions, expectations and engagement. Examples of **assistive technologies** may include: • Screen readers • Voice control systems • Eye-tracking technology • Alternative input devices • Captioning or transcript technologies
5 Solution proposal techniques and documentation 5.1 Structured logic and algorithm representation 5.1.1 Flowcharts 5.1.2 Pseudocode 5.1.3 Structured narratives 5.1.4 Visual logic representations 5.2 Data structure design 5.3 User interface and user interaction design documentation 5.3.1 Wireframes 5.3.2 Storyboards 5.3.3 Sketches 5.3.4 User journeys 5.3.5 Site maps 5.4 Design decisions 5.5 Governance considerations 5.5.1 Oversight, accountability and transparency	To include: • The purpose of low-fidelity design representations including wireframes, storyboards and sketches, in communicating solution ideas during early stages of design • The purpose and importance of documenting solution proposals, design decisions, assumptions and constraints during digital solution development, including how clear and accurate documentation supports communication, development and accountability • How design representations and specified technical formats are used to communicate and represent solution ideas during the design process, including how to produce a clear and structured solution proposal suitable for development and represent solution ideas using specified technical formats • How governance considerations, including oversight, accountability and transparency, influence solution proposals and design decisions, and how to document assumptions, decisions and constraints clearly and accurately

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Topic C: Create and refine hi-fidelity digital solution prototypes	
Teaching content	**Exemplification**
1 Digital solution development approaches 1.1 Technology-enabled development approaches 1.1.1 Configurable solutions 1.1.2 Low-code and block-based approaches 1.1.3 Visual development and automation environments 1.2 Development processes and prototyping 1.2.1 Rapid prototyping 1.2.2 Iterative development and refinement 1.2.3 Feedback, testing and requirement alignment 1.3 Development tools and techniques 1.3.1 Templates and configurable components 1.3.2 Automated and AI-enabled tools 1.4 Documentation and shared understanding 1.4.1 Development and version information 1.4.2 Shared documentation 1.5 Automated and AI-enabled systems 1.5.1 Governance requirements 1.5.2 Risks and limitations 1.5.3 Human oversight	To include: • The purpose and characteristics of technology-enabled development approaches, including configurable solutions, low-code platforms, block-based tools, workflow automation and AI-enabled systems, and how they support rapid prototyping, iterative development, solution refinement and the exploration of digital solution ideas. • How appropriate development tools and techniques, environments and structured inputs are selected and used to create, refine and represent digital solutions in line with identified requirements, context and intended outcomes, including development environments, templates, automated tools and AI-enabled tools. • How to use development tools and techniques to implement appropriate functionality, including relevant inputs, processes, output, navigation, user interactions, error handling and data handling • How to consider system behaviour when implementing functionality within digital systems. • How iterative development, feedback, testing evidence and review activities support the refinement of digital solutions and improve alignment with requirements and success criteria, and the role of documentation and shared understanding in supporting effective development decisions. Documentation may include development notes, version

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Topic C: Create and refine hi-fidelity digital solution prototypes	
Teaching content	**Exemplification**
	information, shared documentation and solution records. • Considerations relating to automated and AI-enabled systems, including relevant governance requirements, the limitations and risks of automated decision-making, the implications for users and organisations, and the need for appropriate human oversight.
2 Testing digital solutions 2.1 Test planning and execution 2.2 Testing through development 2.3 Analysis of testing outcomes 2.4 Refinement and improvement	To include • The purpose of testing throughout the development process and how testing supports the refinement, improvement and validation of digital solutions, including test planning, test execution, iterative testing, automated testing and automated checking • How testing is used to determine whether a digital solution meets defined requirements and is fit for purpose, including testing against functional, accessibility, usability and security requirements • How testing results and evidence are analysed to identify refinements and corrective actions, and how approaches including dry runs, trace tables, walkthroughs and user testing are used to verify and validate solution logic Examples of **elements that could require testing** may include: • Inputs • Outputs • Navigation • User interaction • Error handling • Data storage

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Topic C: Create and refine hi-fidelity digital solution prototypes	
Teaching content	**Exemplification**
	• Accessibility features • Security features
3 Communication and justification 3.1 Design rationale and decision making 3.1.1 Design decisions and justification 3.1.2 Alternative approaches 3.2 Communication of digital solutions 3.2.1 Written communication 3.2.2 Visual communication 3.2.3 Verbal communication 3.3 Audience needs and expertise 3.3.1 Technical audiences 3.3.2 Non-technical audiences 3.4 Stakeholder feedback and solution refinement	To include • The importance of communicating digital solution proposals, design decisions and rationale clearly and appropriately to clients, end users and stakeholders, including adapting communication for technical and non-technical audiences. • How to justify design decisions in relation to user needs and requirements, assumptions, constraints, success criteria, governance considerations and alternative solution approaches • How to select and use appropriate communication methods, including written, visual and verbal communication, presentations and demonstrations, to communicate proposed solutions effectively • The role of stakeholder and user feedback in refining digital solutions and supporting development decisions, including feedback from clients, end users, peer reviews and prototype reviews

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Marking criteria

The tables below give the marking criteria for the tasks in the set assignment for this unit.

Section 5.4 provides full information on how to assess the NEA units and apply the marking criteria.

The command words used in the marking criteria are defined in Appendix A.

<table>
<tr><td>Task 1a:</td><td colspan="3">Explain client requirements, end-user needs and intended outcomes [AO1x2, AO2x4]</td></tr>
<tr><td>Response level</td><td>Mark</td><td colspan="2">Marking Criteria</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Mark Band 1</td><td>1</td><td>Just:</td><td>Two client requirements, end-user needs and intended outcomes are included with limited explanation.</td></tr>
<tr><td>2</td><td>Secure:</td><td>More than two client requirements, end-user needs and intended outcomes are included with limited explanation.</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Mark Band 2</td><td>3</td><td>Just:</td><td>More than two client requirements, end-user needs and intended outcomes are included with clear explanation.</td></tr>
<tr><td>4</td><td>Secure:</td><td>Most of the main client requirements, end-user needs and intended outcomes are included with clear explanation.</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Mark Band 3</td><td>5</td><td>Just:</td><td>Most of the main client requirements, end-user needs and intended outcomes are included with detailed explanation.</td></tr>
<tr><td>6</td><td>Secure:</td><td>All relevant client requirements, end-user needs and intended outcomes are included with detailed explanation.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">Assessment guidance:
For each mark band students must explain the required number of client requirements, end-user needs and intended outcomes.
Students must distinguish between the organisation’s stated requirements and the underlying needs of its end-users where relevant.
Students could use content from Topics A1 and A2.</td></tr>
</table>

If your work does not meet Mark Band 1 criteria, you will be awarded zero marks for this task.

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Task 1b	**Analyse** the problem and recommend an appropriate solution scope. [AO2x4, AO3x2]		
Response level	**Mark**	**Marking Criteria**	
Mark Band 1	**1**	**Just:**	**Two** aspects of the problem are identified with **limited** analysis **and** recommendations.
	2	**Secure:**	**More than two** relevant aspects of the problem are identified with **limited** analysis and recommendations.
Mark Band 2	**3**	**Just:**	**More than two** aspects of the problem are **partially** analysed with appropriate recommendations.
	4	**Secure:**	**Most** of the **main** aspects of the problem are **partially** analysed with appropriate recommendations.
Mark Band 3	**5**	**Just:**	**Most** of the **main** aspects of the problem are **comprehensively** analysed with appropriate recommendations.
	6	**Secure:**	**All relevant** aspects of the problem are **comprehensively** analysed with appropriate recommendations.
Assessment guidance: • Students **must** consider relevant inputs, outputs, constraints, assumptions, dependencies and success criteria, and distinguish between essential and desirable requirements in their analysis. • Students **could** use content from Topic A2.			

If your work does not meet Mark Band 1 criteria, you will be awarded zero marks for this task.

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Task 2a	**Design** algorithms **and** logical processes [AO1x1, AO2x5]		
Response level	**Mark**	**Marking Criteria**	
Mark Band 1	**1**	**Just:**	**One** algorithm **or** logical process design is provided with **limited** detail.
	2	**Secure:**	**More than one** algorithm **or** logical process design is provided with **limited** detail.
Mark Band 2	**3**	**Just:**	**More than one** algorithm **and** logical process design is provided with **clear** detail.
	4	**Secure:**	**Most** of the **main** algorithm **and** logical process designs are provided with **clear** detail.
Mark Band 3	**5**	**Just:**	**Most** of the **main** algorithm **and** logical process designs are provided with **comprehensive** detail.
	6	**Secure:**	**All relevant** algorithm **and** logical process designs are provided with **comprehensive** detail.

Assessment guidance:

- To achieve mark band 1, students must apply the required number of **either** algorithm **or** logical process designs **or** the required number across both. For mark bands 2 and 3, students must apply the required number of **both** algorithm **and** logical process designs.
- Students **must** use one or more appropriate representations to communicate the structural logic of the proposed solution. These may include flowcharts or pseudocode methods from Topic B5.
- Students **could** use content from Topics B2 and B3.
- Designs **must** contain enough detail to be interpreted by someone who has not previously seen them.

If your work does not meet Mark Band 1 criteria, you will be awarded zero marks for this task.

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Task 2b	**Design** data structures [AO1x1, AO2x2]		
Response level	**Mark**	**Marking Criteria**	
Mark Band 1	**1**	**Secure:**	**Three** aspects of the data structure design are included with **limited** detail.
Mark Band 1	**2**	**Secure:**	**Most** of the **main** aspects of the data structure design are included with **clear** detail.
Mark Band 1	**3**	**Secure:**	**All relevant** aspects of the data structure design are included with **comprehensive** detail.
Assessment guidance: • Students **must** show how relevant data will be organised and stored in their data structure designs. • Students **could** use content from Topic B5.			

If your work does not meet Mark Band 1 criteria, you will be awarded zero marks for this task.

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Task 2c	**Design** user interfaces and user interactions [AO1x1, AO2x5]		
Response level	**Mark**	**Marking Criteria**	
Mark Band 1	**1**	**Just:**	**One** interface **or** user interaction design is provided with **limited** detail.
	2	**Secure:**	**More than one** interface **or** user interaction designs are provided with **limited** detail.
Mark Band 2	**3**	**Just:**	**More than one** interface **and** user interaction design is provided with **clear** detail.
	4	**Secure:**	**Most** of the **main** interface **and** user interaction designs are provided with **clear** detail.
Mark Band 3	**5**	**Just:**	**Most** of the **main** interface **and** user interaction designs are provided with **comprehensive** detail.
	6	**Secure:**	**All relevant** interface **and** user interaction designs are provided with **comprehensive** detail.
Assessment guidance: • For mark band 1, students must apply the required number of **either** interface **or** user interaction designs or the required number across both. For mark bands 2 and 3, students must evaluate the required number of **both** interface **and** user interaction designs. • Students **could** use content from Topic B4.			

If your work does not meet Mark Band 1 criteria, you will be awarded zero marks for this task.

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<table>
<tr><td>Task 2d</td><td colspan="3">Justify your design decisions, assumptions and constraints in relation to user needs, requirements, success criteria and relevant governance considerations, including consideration of alternative approaches where appropriate. [AO3x6]</td></tr>
<tr><td>Response level</td><td>Mark</td><td colspan="2">Marking Criteria</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Mark Band 1</td><td>1</td><td>Just:</td><td>One design decision, assumption, and constraint is documented with limited justification.</td></tr>
<tr><td>2</td><td>Secure:</td><td>More than one design decision, assumption and constraint is documented with limited justification.</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Mark Band 2</td><td>3</td><td>Just:</td><td>More than one design decision, assumption and constraint is documented with clear justification.</td></tr>
<tr><td>4</td><td>Secure:</td><td>Most of the main design decisions, assumptions and are documented with clear justification.</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Mark Band 3</td><td>5</td><td>Just:</td><td>Most of the main design decisions, assumptions and constraints are documented with detailed justification.</td></tr>
<tr><td>6</td><td>Secure:</td><td>All relevant design decisions, assumptions and constraints with are documented detailed justification.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">Assessment guidance:
For each mark band students must justify the required number of decisions, assumptions and constraints.
Students could use content from Topics B1, B5 and C3.</td></tr>
</table>

If your work does not meet Mark Band 1 criteria, you will be awarded zero marks for this task.

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Task 2e	**Communicate** the proposed solution. [AO2x3] (**S**)		
Response level	**Mark**	**Marking Criteria**	
Mark Band 1	**1**	**Secure:**	The proposed solution is communicated with **limited** consideration of audience needs.
Mark Band 2	**2**	**Secure:**	The proposed solution is communicated with **partial** consideration of audience needs. (**S**)
Mark Band 3	**3**	**Secure:**	The proposed solution is communicated with **full** consideration of audience needs. (**S**)

Assessment guidance:

- Students **must** communicate the proposed solution clearly in a form suitable for both technical and non-technical audiences. The communication may form part of the solution proposal rather than being produced as a separate presentation.
- Students need to draw on knowledge and understanding from across the course of study in order to achieve mark bands 2 and 3. (**S**)
- Students **could** use content from Topic C3. and F016 Topic D.

If your work does not meet Mark Band 1 criteria, you will be awarded zero marks for this task.

Task 3 assessment guidance:

- Ideally students will create the digital solution designed in **Task 1**. However, if students deviate from their design(s), they should not be penalised when assessing **Task 2**.
- The creation of the digital solution is assessed in **Tasks 3a**, **3b** and **3c**.
- To confirm assessment decisions made for this task, the Cambridge OCR assessor will need to be able to see the final digital solution. Therefore, students **must** provide video/screen recordings of the final digital solution prototype being demonstrated.

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Task 3a	**Create** the digital solution using development tools and techniques [AO1x1, AO2x2]		
Response level	**Mark**	**Marking Criteria**	
Mark Band 1	**1**	**Secure:**	Development tools **and** techniques are used with **limited** suitability for the task.
Mark Band 2	**2**	**Secure:**	Development tools **and** techniques are used with **some** suitability for the task.
Mark Band 3	**3**	**Secure:**	Development tools **and** techniques are used with **complete** suitability for the task.
Assessment guidance: • Students **could** use content from Topic C1. • Where automated or AI-enabled systems are incorporated into the solution, students **must** consider relevant governance requirements, risks, limitations and the need for human oversight.			

If your work does not meet Mark Band 1 criteria, you will be awarded zero marks for this task.

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Task 3b	**Create** the digital solution to meet client requirements, end-user needs and intended outcomes [AO2x6]		
Response level	**Mark**	**Marking Criteria**	
Mark Band 1	**1**	**Just:**	**Two** client requirements**,** end-user needs **or** intended outcomes are met with **limited** success.
	2	**Secure:**	**More than two** client requirements, end-user needs **or** intended outcomes are met with **limited** success
Mark Band 2	**3**	**Just:**	**More than two** client requirements, end-user needs **or** intended outcomes are met with **partial** success.
	4	**Secure:**	**Most** of the **main** client requirements, end-user needs **and** intended outcomes are met with **partial** success.
Mark Band 3	**5**	**Just:**	**Most** of the **main** client requirements, end-user needs **and** intended outcomes are met with **complete** success.
	6	**Secure:**	**All relevant** client requirements, end-user needs **and** intended outcomes are met with **complete** success.

Assessment guidance:

- To achieve 1-3 marks, students must meet the required number of **either** client requirements**,** end-user needs **or** intended outcomes **or** the required number across both. For 4-6 marks, students must meet the required number of client requirements, end-user needs **and** intended outcomes.
- Students **must** create a digital solution to meet the client requirements, end-user needs and intended outcomes identified in Task 1.
- Students **could** use content from Topics A1 and C1.
- Evidence for this task will come from the video or screen recordings that demonstrate the digital solutions functionality.

If your work does not meet Mark Band 1 criteria, you will be awarded zero marks for this task.

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Task 3c	**Create** a functioning digital solution [AO2x6]		
Response level	**Mark**	**Marking Criteria**	
Mark Band 1	**1**	**Just:**	**Two** features of the digital solution operate with **limited** functionality.
	2	**Secure:**	**More than two** features of the digital solution operate with **limited** functionality.
Mark Band 2	**3**	**Just:**	**More than two** features of the digital solution operate with **partial** functionality.
	4	**Secure:**	**Most** of the **main** features of the digital solution operate with **partial** functionality.
Mark Band 3	**5**	**Just:**	**Most** of the **main** features of the digital solution operate with **complete** functionality.
	6	**Secure:**	**All relevant** features of the digital solution operate with **complete** functionality.
Assessment guidance: • Students **could** use content from Topic C1. • Evidence for this task will come from the Video or screen recordings that demonstrates the digital solutions functionality.			

If your work does not meet Mark Band 1 criteria, you will be awarded zero marks for this task.

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Task 3d	**Test** the digital solution throughout development [AO1x1, AO2x5] (**S**)		
Response level	**Mark**	**Marking Criteria**	
Mark Band 1	**1**	**Just:**	**Two** tests are completed with **limited** detail.
	2	**Secure:**	**More than two** tests are completed with **limited** detail.
Mak Band 2	**3**	**Just:**	**More than two** requirements are tested with **partial** detail. (**S**)
	4	**Secure:**	**Most** of the **main** requirements are tested with **partial** detail. (**S**)
Mark Band 3	**5**	**Just:**	**Most** of the **main** requirements are tested with **comprehensive** detail. (**S**)
	6	**Secure:**	**All relevant** requirements are tested with **comprehensive** detail. (**S**)

Assessment guidance:

- Students **must** document tests including identification of issues, resolution through refinements and evidence of retesting.
- We recommend that students use the test plan template provided. However, if students use a different template which is appropriate for this task, they **must** not be penalised for doing so.
- Teacher provided templates should not include examples or instructions.
- Students need to draw on knowledge and understanding from across the course of study in order to achieve mark bands 2 and 3. (**S**)
- Students **could** use content from Topic C2 and F015 Topic C.

If your work does not meet Mark Band 1 criteria, you will be awarded zero marks for this task.

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Task 3e	**Justify** any further refinement or development opportunities that could improve the completed solution including any potential use of automated or AI-enabled functionality and associated governance, risks, limitations and human oversight requirements. [AO3x3]		
Response level	**Mark**	**Marking Criteria**	
Mark Band 1	**1**	**Secure:**	**Two** refinements **or** further development opportunities are identified with **limited** justification.
Mark Band 2	**2**	**Secure:**	**More than two** refinements **and** further development opportunities are identified with **clear** justification.
Mark Band 3	**3**	**Secure:**	**Most relevant** refinements **and** further development opportunities are identified with **detailed** justification.

3Assessment guidance:

- For mark band 1, students must justify the required number of **either** refinements **or** further developments or the required number across both. For mark bands 2 and 3, students must justify the required number of **both** refinements **and** further development opportunities.
- Students **could** consider functionality, usability, accessibility, efficiency, sustainability and future development opportunities.
- Students could use content from Topic C3.

If your work does not meet Mark Band 1 criteria, you will be awarded zero marks for this task.

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Synoptic assessment

Some of the knowledge, understanding and skills needed to complete this unit will draw on the learning in Unit F015: Digital systems and security and, Unit F016: Digital solution design and communication.

This table details these synoptic links.

Unit F015: Digital systems and security		**Unit F020: Developing digital solutions**	
Topic		**Topic**	
A5	User interface types	B4	User-centred design
C1	Testing	C2	Testing digital solutions
C2	Test evaluation	C2	Testing digital solutions
D2	Protection of personal and sensitive information	B1	Factors influencing digital solution design
D3	Privacy and confidentiality	B1	Factors influencing digital solution design
D5	Legal and ethical responsibilities	B1	Factors influencing digital solution design

Unit F016: Digital solution design and communication		**Unit F020: Developing digital solutions**	
Topic		**Topic**	
A1	Principles of problem solving	B2	Digital solution design principles
B1	Digital system requirements	A1	Client, user and solution requirements
B2	Methods for gathering, analysing and interpreting user requirements	A2	Problem definition and solution scope
B3	Design constraints	A2	Problem definition and solution scope
B4	Tools for translating requirements into digital solution designs	B5	Solution proposal techniques and documentation
C1	Automated and AI-enabled systems	C1	Digital solution development approaches
C2	Automated and AI-enabled decision making	C1	Digital solution development approaches

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Unit F016: Digital solution design and communication		**Unit F020: Developing digital solutions**	
Topic		**Topic**	
C3	Human oversight of automated and AI-enabled systems	C1	Digital solution development approaches
C4	Prompts and structured inputs for automated and AI-enabled systems	C1	Digital solution development approaches
C5	Generated outputs from automated and AI-enabled systems	C1	Digital solution development approaches
D1	Methods of communication	C3	Communication and justification
D2	Factors impacting quality of communication	C3	Communication and justification
D3	Communication skills	C3	Communication and justification
E1	Ethical considerations	B1 C3	Factors influencing digital solution design Communication and justification
E2	Legal considerations	B1 C3	Factors influencing digital solution design Communication and justification
E3	Sustainability considerations	B1 C3	Factors influencing digital solution design Communication and justification

More information about synoptic assessment in these qualifications can be found in Section 4.2 Synoptic assessment.

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4 Assessment and grading

4.1 Overview of the assessment

Qualification detail	Qualification information
Certification entry code	H101
Qualification title	Cambridge OCR V Level in Digital Systems and Data
Guided learning hours (GLH)	360*
Reference	TBC
Total units	Has five units: Mandatory units F015, F016, F017, F018 Optional units F019, F020

*the guided learning hours includes assessment time for each unit

Unit F015: Digital systems and security

75 GLH

1 hour 15 minutes written exam

60 marks (60 UMS)

Set and marked by us

Calculators are not required in this exam.

The exam has two parts and all questions are compulsory. There will be short, medium and extended response questions.

- Section A: 25 marks.
- Section B: 35 marks.

Unit F016: Digital solution design and communication

75 GLH

1 hour 15 minutes written exam

60 marks (60 UMS)

Set and marked by us

Calculators are not required in this exam.

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The exam has two parts and all questions are compulsory. There will be short, medium and extended response questions.

- Section A: 25 marks.
- Section B: 35 marks.

Unit F017: Application of data analytics

70 GLH

Our set assignments

Centre-assessed and moderated by us

This set assignment has 4 practical tasks.

It should take 15 GLH to complete.

Unit F018: Application of cyber security

70GLH

Our set assignments

Centre-assessed and moderated by us

This set assignment has 3 practical tasks.

It should take 15 GLH to complete.

Unit F019: Implementing digital systems

70 GLH

Our set assignments

Centre-assessed and moderated by us

This set assignment has 3 practical tasks.

It should take 15 GLH to complete.

Unit F020: Developing digital solutions

70 GLH

Our set assignments

Centre-assessed and moderated by us

This set assignment has 3 practical tasks.

It should take 15 GLH to complete.

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The set assignments for NEA units are on our secure website, Teach Cambridge. The dates for which they are live are shown on the front cover.

4.2 Synoptic assessment

Synoptic assessment is a built-in feature of these qualifications. It means that students need to use an appropriate selection of their knowledge, understanding and skills developed across each qualification in an integrated way and apply them to a key task or tasks.

This helps students to build a holistic understanding of the subject and the connections between different elements of learning, so they can go on to apply what they learn from these qualifications to new and different situations and contexts.

The exam units allow students to gain underpinning knowledge and understanding relevant to digital systems and data. The NEA units draw on and strengthen this learning by assessing it in an applied or practical way.

Students must apply their learning in ways which show they are able to draw together different areas of knowledge, understanding and skills from across the full course of study and construct and develop an extended line of reasoning. Each exam will have a question with synoptic marks applied. The NEA assessment for units F017, F018, F019 and F020 also contain specific synoptic marking criteria. These will be identified by an (S).

It is important to be aware of the synoptic links between the units so that teaching, learning and assessment can be planned accordingly. Section 3.3 shows the synoptic links for each unit.

4.3 Transferable skills

These qualifications give students the opportunity to gain broad, transferable skills and experiences that they can apply in future study, employment and life.

These skills include:

- analysing
- decision-making
- communication
- planning
- investigative skills
- digital responsibility

4.4 Calculating the qualification grades

V Level qualifications are graded on the scale: A*, A, B, C, D, E and P where A* is the highest. Students who do not to reach the minimum standard of P will be Unclassified (U).

When we work out students' overall grades, we need to be able to compare performance on the same unit in different assessments over time and between different units. We use a Uniform Mark Scale (UMS) to do this.

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A student's uniform mark for each exam and NEA unit is calculated from the student's raw mark on that unit. The raw mark is converted to the equivalent mark on the uniform mark scale. Marks between grade boundaries are converted on a pro rata basis.

When unit results are issued, the student's unit grade and uniform mark are given. The uniform mark is shown out of the maximum uniform mark for the unit (for example, 48/60).

On results day we will publish a marks calculator, for the specific series, on our website to help you convert raw marks into uniform marks.

The student's uniform marks for each unit will be aggregated to give a total uniform mark for the qualification. The student's overall grade will be determined by the total uniform mark.

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5 Non-exam assessment (NEA) units

This section gives guidance on completing the NEA units. In the NEA units, students build a portfolio of evidence to meet the marking criteria for the unit.

Assessment for these qualifications **must** adhere to JCQ's Instructions for conducting non-examination assessments (Vocational and Technical Qualifications).

Do **not** use JCQ's Instructions for conducting non-examination assessments (GCE and GCSE Specifications) – these are only relevant to GCE and GCSE specifications.

The NEA units are centre-assessed and externally moderated by us.

You **must** read and understand all the rules and guidance in this section **before** your students start the set assignments.

If you have any questions, please contact us for help and support.

5.1 Preparing for NEA unit delivery and assessment

5.1.1 Centre and teacher/assessor responsibilities

We assume the teacher is the assessor for the NEA units.

Before you start to offer this qualification, you must be confident your centre can fulfil all the responsibilities described below. It is the responsibility of the head of centre[1] to make sure our requirements are met. The head of centre must ensure that:

- there are enough trained or qualified people to teach and assess the expected number of students you have in your cohorts.
- teaching staff have the relevant level of subject knowledge and skills to deliver and assess this qualification.
- teaching staff will fully cover the knowledge, understanding and skills requirements in teaching and learning activities.
- all necessary resources are available for teaching staff and students during teaching and assessment activities. This gives students every opportunity to meet the requirements of the qualification and reach the highest grade possible.
- there is a system of internal standardisation in place so that all assessment decisions for centre-assessed assignments are consistent, fair, valid and reliable (see Section 5.4.3).
- there is enough time for effective teaching and learning, assessment and internal standardisation.

[1] This is the most senior officer in the organisation, directly responsible for the delivery of Cambridge OCR qualifications, for example, the headteacher or principal of a school/college. The head of centre accepts full responsibility for the correct administration and conduct of Cambridge OCR exams.

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- robust processes are in place to make sure that students' work is individual and confirmed as authentic (see Section 5.2.2).
- our set assignments are used for students' summative assessments. You must make sure that students use the assignment that is live for the period during which they are taking their summative assessment.
- our set assignments are **not** used for practice. This includes both assignments that are currently live or live assignments that have expired. Sample assessment material for each of the NEA units is available on Teach Cambridge and our website. This sample assessment material can be used for practice purposes.
- students understand what they need to do to achieve the marking criteria.
- students understand what it means when we say work must be authentic and individual and they (and you) follow our requirements to make sure their work is their own.
- students know they must not reference another individual's personal details in any evidence produced for summative assessment, in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and the UK General Data Protection Regulations (UK GDPR). It is the student's responsibility to make sure evidence that includes another individual's personal details is anonymised.
- marks submitted to us are correct and are accurately recorded and adhere to the published deadlines.
- assessment of set assignments adheres to the JCQ's Instructions for conducting non-examination assessments (Vocational and Technical Qualifications) and the JCQ AI use in assessments: Protecting the integrity of qualifications.
- a declaration is made at the point you're submitting any work to us for assessment that confirms:
    - all assessment is conducted according to the specified regulations.
    - students' work is authentic.
    - marks have been transcribed accurately.

Section 5.3.5 has more information about student and centre declarations.

(Failing to meet the assessment requirements might be considered as malpractice.)

- centre records and students' work are kept according to these requirements:
    - students' work **must** be kept secure until **after** the unit has been awarded and any review of results or appeals processed. We cannot consider any review if the work has not been kept.
    - internal standardisation and assessment records must be kept securely for a minimum of three years after the date we've issued a certificate for a qualification.
- all cases of suspected malpractice involving teachers or students are reported (see Section 5.3.1).

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5.1.2 Health and safety

In unit F019, when students are provided with hardware, connectivity or other physical components to configure, all relevant health and safety policies and procedures **must** be followed. A risk assessment **must** be completed by the centre before students undertake the assignment.

Teachers **must** intervene if there is a health and safety risk and reflect this in the assessment if the student required additional support to work safely and independently.

5.2 Requirements and guidance for delivering and marking the set assignments

The assignments are:

- set by us.
- taken under supervised conditions (unless we specify otherwise in the assessment guidance).
- assessed by the teacher.
- moderated by us.

You can find the set assignments on our secure website, Teach Cambridge.

The set assignments give an approximate time that it will take to complete all the tasks. These timings are for guidance only, but should be used by you, the teacher, to give students an indication of how long to spend on each task. You can decide how the time should be allocated between each task or part task. Students can complete the tasks and produce the evidence across several sessions. Students' evidence (either hard copy or digital) must be kept securely by the teacher and access to assessment responses must be controlled. Students aren't permitted to access their work in between the assessment sessions.

We will publish a new set assignment for each NEA unit every year. The live assignment for each NEA unit will be published **for teachers** on Teach Cambridge in November each year. They will be available to support teacher preparation and planning.

You **must not** share these assignments with your students before the live assessment sessions you have scheduled. We expect you will need to complete several weeks of teaching and preparation before students begin the assessment.

When planning, you must consider the full assessment period during which students will complete the assignment(s). Students must not have access to the assignment(s) before or after this period, unless they are completing a reattempt in line with the reattempt arrangements.

Students are allowed to resubmit work based on the same live assignment. Section 5.4.5 provides more information about resubmissions.

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You **must**:

- only download set assignments from our secure website, Teach Cambridge, and use a set assignment that is live for assessment for all summative assessment of students.
- have made unit entries before submitting NEA work for moderation.
- **not** share the set assignments with anyone from outside of your centre. These must only be shared with appropriate centre staff and students taking the assessments.

  (More information about maintaining the integrity of assessment materials is in the JCQ document General regulations for approved centres.
- make sure students know that they must not share assessment material or their own work with others, including posting or sharing on social media.

(More information is in the JCQ guidance information for candidates Using social media and examinations/assessments.)

The rest of this section is about how to manage the delivery and marking of the set assignments so that assessment is valid and reliable. Please note that failing to meet these requirements might be considered as malpractice.

Here is a summary of what you need to do.

You **must**:

- be familiar with the requirements set out in the JCQ document Instructions for conducting non-examination assessments (Vocational and Technical Qualifications).
- have covered the knowledge, understanding and skills with your students and be sure they are ready for assessment **before** you start the summative assessment. This may include students practising applying their learning and receiving feedback from teachers in preparing to take the assessment.
- use the correct live set assignment for summative assessment of the students. The dates for which set assignments are live for summative assessment are shown on the front cover. These assignments are available on Teach Cambridge.
- give students the Student Guide before they start the assessment.
- make sure all candidates have read the JCQ document Information for candidates – non-examination assessments and the notice to candidates section of the authentication form before beginning their work.
- familiarise yourself with the assessment guidance relating to the tasks. The assessment guidance for each unit is in Section 3.3 in the marking criteria grids and with the student tasks in the assignments.
- make sure students are clear about the tasks they must complete and the marking criteria they are attempting to meet.
- give students a reasonable amount of time to complete the assignments and be fair and consistent to all students. The estimated time we think each assignment should take is stated

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in the set assignments. In that time students can work on the tasks under the specified conditions until the date that you collect the work for centre assessment.

- tell the students the resources they can use in the assignment before they start the assessment tasks.
- only give students templates provided by us. Where a template is needed for a task, we have provided it in the assignment. The Assessment Guidance will tell students if they **must** use the template(s) we provide. Where this is **not** stated as a mandatory requirement ('must use'), we recommend that students use the template(s) we provide, but they will not be penalised if they choose not to.
- monitor students' progress to make sure work is capable of being assessed against the marking criteria, on track for being completed in good time and is the student's own work:
    - NEA work must be completed in the centre under teacher supervision. Supervision is not invigilation. A supervised classroom does not require exam conditions in that classroom. We do not require the internet to be disabled in the supervised classroom. NEA assessments would typically be completed in normal curriculum time:
        - work **must** be completed in the supervised sessions with enough supervision and use of professional judgement to make sure that it can be authenticated as the student's own work. This means that any source (such as the internet) that may be used by the student when they complete their work must be used appropriately to support the students' **own** work. Students must not claim work sourced through the internet (or any other source) as their own (see Section 5.2.4). The supervising teacher should be the teacher who will authenticate the students' work, but we accept that this may not always be possible, for example, when cover is required. Where this is the case, teachers should take steps to ensure they can confidently authenticate candidates' work. (See Section 5.2.2 for more information on ways to authenticate work.) You must be familiar with the requirements of the JCQ document AI use in assessments: Protecting the integrity of qualifications before assessment starts.
        - there may be exceptions to the requirement for supervised conditions if there is work to complete to support the assignment tasks (e.g. research). The assignment and assessment guidance will specify if there are exceptions.
        - Where students are allowed to complete work outside of supervised conditions (e.g. research that may be allowed between supervised sessions) you **must** make sure that they only bring notes into the supervised sessions, relating to the work they are allowed to complete unsupervised (e.g. notes relating to the research they have done) and to make sure any work they have done is independent. They must not use unsupervised time as an opportunity to:
            - create drafts of work for their tasks
            - gather information to use in other aspects of their tasks.

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    - if you provide any material to prepare students for the set assignment, you must adhere to the rules on using referencing and on acceptable levels of guidance to students. This is in Section 5.2.4 and 5.3.
    - students must produce their work independently (see Sections 5.2.3 and 5.3).
    - you must make sure students know to keep their work and passwords secure and know that they must not share completed work with other students, use any aspect of another student's work or share their passwords.
- complete the **teacher observation record** that is with the assignments for tasks that state it is needed. This must be submitted with the students' evidence. You **must** follow the guidance given with the form when completing it. Electronic signatures may be used on the forms.
- use the marking criteria to assess students' work.
- before submitting a final outcome to us, mark students' completed work and allow them to repeat any part of the assignment, reworking their original evidence. We call this a reattempt. Students must have completed the whole assignment before you mark their work. Any feedback you give to students on the marked work, must:
    - be factual: telling the student what you have observed, not what to do to improve their work.
    - be recorded.
    - be available to the moderator.

(See Section 5.3 on Feedback and Section 5.4.5 on resubmitting work.)

You **must not:**

- create your own assignments for students to use for practice or live assessment.
- change any part of the set assignments (scenarios or tasks).
- mark students' work in stages, providing feedback at each stage. This would be iterative assessment which is not allowed.
- accept multiple reattempts of work where small changes have been made in response to feedback. Marking and feedback must not be an iterative process.
- allow teachers or students to add, amend or remove any work **after** submission for moderation.
- give detailed advice and suggestions to individuals or the whole class on how work may be improved to meet the marking criteria. This includes giving access to student work as an exemplar.
- allow students access to their assignment work between teacher supervised sessions. There may be exceptions where students are allowed to complete work independently (e.g. research). Any exceptions will be stated in the assignments.

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- practise the live set assignment tasks with the students. We provide sample assignments for you to use for practice purposes.
- give students any other templates to use when completing their live assignments. Students may create their own templates to record their evidence. If they use templates accessed from other sources, they **must** make sure that:
    - the source is referenced.
    - the template is not pre-populated with responses for which the students may gain marks.

5.2.1 Scope of assessment modification

The set assignments for each unit are designed to meet the unit content and marking criteria. To make sure that the assessments remain fair and reliable, no modification is allowed.

5.2.2 Ways to authenticate work

All NEA work must be completed under teacher supervision (unless the assessment guidance for a specific task or sub-task advises otherwise). In addition, you must complete enough checks to be confident that the work you mark is the student's own and was produced independently.

You should discuss work in progress with students, including asking them questions such as what they are planning/doing and why. This will make sure that work is being completed in a planned and timely way and will give you opportunities to check the authenticity of the work. This is not an opportunity to offer additional guidance to students.

You **must**:

- have read and understood the JCQ documents Instructions for conducting non-examination assessments (Vocational and Technical Qualifications) and AI use in assessments: Your role in protecting the integrity of qualifications.
- make sure students and other teachers understand what constitutes plagiarism and other forms of malpractice (e.g. collusion and copying).
- not accept plagiarised work as evidence.
- use your regular ongoing conversations with students as an opportunity to support authentication of their work. You know your students well and can use verbal conversation or questioning as a useful assurance moment, enabling students talk to you about the approaches they've taken to produce their work. Make sure students and teachers fill in authentication declarations (see Section 5.3.5).

5.2.3 Group work

Group work is not allowed for the NEA assignments in these qualifications.

5.2.4 Plagiarism (including AI misuse)

Students must use their own words when they produce final written pieces of work to show they have genuinely applied their knowledge and understanding. When students use their own words,

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ideas and opinions, it reduces the possibility of their work being identified as plagiarised. Plagiarism is:

- the submission of someone else's work as your own
- failure to acknowledge a source correctly, including any use of written material, the internet or Artificial Intelligence (AI).

You might find the following JCQ documents helpful:

- Plagiarism in assessments
- AI use in assessments: Protecting the integrity of qualifications

Due to increasing advancements in AI technology, we strongly recommend that you are familiar with the likely outputs from AI tools. This could include using AI tools to produce responses to some of the assignment tasks, so that you can identify typical formats and wording that these may produce. This may help you identify any cases of potential plagiarism from students using AI tools to generate written responses.

Plagiarism (including AI misuse) makes up a large percentage of cases of suspected malpractice reported to us by our moderators. You must **not** accept plagiarised work as evidence.

Plagiarism (including AI misuse) often happens innocently when students do not know that they must reference or acknowledge their sources or aren't sure how to do this. It's important to make sure your students understand:

- the meaning of plagiarism (including AI misuse) and what penalties may be applied.
- that they can refer to research, quotations or evidence produced by somebody else, but they must list and reference their sources and clearly mark quotations.
- quoting someone else's work, even when it's properly sourced and referenced, doesn't evidence understanding. The student must 'do' something with that information to show they understand it. For example, if a student has to analyse data from an experiment, quoting data doesn't show that they understand what it means. The student must interpret the data and, by relating it to their assignment, say what they think it means. The work must clearly show how the student is using the material they have referenced to inform their thoughts, ideas or conclusions.

We have a Guide to referencing on our website. We have also produced a poster about referencing and plagiarism which may be useful to share with your students.

You must teach your students:

- to always reference or acknowledge material copied from the internet or other sources. This applies to infographics (graphical information providing data or knowledge) as well
- how to reference and explain why it's important to do it:
    - use quote marks to show the beginning and end of the copied work.
    - for website text, to list the URL address and the date they accessed the website.

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- show the name of any AI source used and the date the content was generated for computer-generated content (such as an AI Chatbot).
- retain a copy of the question(s) and computer-generated content for reference, assessment and authentication purposes (see JCQ guidance: AI and Assessments, A quick guide for students for requirements)
- for other publications, to list:
  - the name of the author.
  - the name of the resource/book/printed article.
  - the year in which it was published.
  - the page number.
- to always identify information they have copied from teaching handouts and presentations for the unit, using quote marks and stating the text is from class handouts.

Identifying copied/plagiarised work

Inconsistencies throughout a student's work are often indicators of plagiarism. For example:

- different tones of voice, sentence structure and formality across pieces of work.
- use of American expressions, spellings and contexts (such as American laws and guidelines).
- dated expressions and references to past events as being current.
- sections of text in a document where the font or format is inconsistent with other sections.

What to do if you think a student has plagiarised

If you identify plagiarism during ongoing monitoring of students' work, you can address this in your centre (for example, by instructing the student(s) involved to re-do the affected tasks).

If you identify plagiarised work at the point of marking or internal standardisation, you **must**:

- take this into account when applying the mark scheme.
- include the plagiarised work with any work that is sent to the moderator, if it is part of the moderation sample, with a note on the Unit Recording Sheet to state that there is plagiarism in the work and that marks have been adjusted accordingly.
- report the student(s) for plagiarism in line with the JCQ document Suspected malpractice policies and procedures.
- fill in the **JCQ form M1**.

In line with the policy and procedures of JCQ on suspected malpractice, the sanctions applied for plagiarism (including AI misuse) could result in a warning, loss of marks or loss of aggregation or certification opportunity.

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5.3 Feedback

Feedback to students on work in progress towards summative assessment

You can discuss work in progress towards summative assessment with students to make sure it's being done in a planned and timely way. It also provides an opportunity to check the authenticity of the work. You must intervene if there's a health and safety risk (and reflect this in your assessment if the student's ability to operate safely and independently is part of the criteria).

Generic guidance to the whole class is also allowed. This could include reminding students to check they have provided evidence to cover all key aspects of the task. Individual students can be prompted to double check for gaps in evidence providing that specific gaps are not pointed out to them.

You can give general feedback and support if one or more students are struggling to get started on an aspect of the assignment or following a break between sessions working on the assignment.

For example, if a student is seeking more guidance that suggests they are not able to apply knowledge, skills and understanding to complete their evidence, you can remind them that they had a lesson which covered the topic. The student would then need to review their own notes to find this information and apply it as needed.

Feedback must not provide specific advice and guidance that would be construed as coaching. This would compromise the student's ability to independently perform the task(s) they are doing and constitutes malpractice. Our moderators use a number of measures to assure themselves the work is the student's own.

If an individual student needs additional help or support because they are struggling to start a task or part of a task that is **critical to them accessing the rest of the task or assignment**, this **must** be recorded on the student's work and/or Unit Recording Sheet (URS) for our Moderator to see. In this situation, the student should **not** be awarded the marks for the work for which they received help.

Assessing completed work

When students have completed their work on an assignment, you must mark it and give feedback to them. Assessment should not be an iterative process. This means you must not assess work and give feedback on it in stages. You must only assess the work when the assignment is complete.

Feedback **must:**

- be supportive, encouraging and positive.
- tell the student what has been noticed, not what you think (for example, if you have observed the student completing a task, you can describe what happened, what was produced and what was demonstrated).

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Feedback **can**:

- identify what task and part of the task could be improved, but not say how to improve it. You could show the student work from a **different** unit that demonstrates higher achievement, but you must not detail to the student how they could achieve that in their work. If you are using another student's work from a different unit as an example, you must anonymise this work and make sure that the potential to plagiarise from this work is minimised. You could remind students that they had a lesson on a specific topic and that they could review their notes, but you must not tell them how they could apply the teaching to improve their work.
- comment on what has been achieved, for example 'the evidence is **secure** for MB2'
- identify that the student hasn't met a command word or marking criteria requirement. For example, 'This is a description, not an evaluation'.
- identify what area of work could be improved but not detail how to improve it. For example, students can be reminded that they had a lesson on a specific topic and could review their notes, but can not be told how to apply the teaching to improve the work.
- use text from the specification, assignment or marking criteria in general guidance to clarify what is needed in the work. For example, 'You have chosen effective sources of secondary research in findings that are fully relevant to the aims'
- point out where the work sits within the mark bands but students must make their own decisions as to what to improve and how. For example, the feedback can say 'this shows a **clear** explanation of **some** items/aspects' (for mark band 2) but not precisely what should be added to make it 'show a **thorough** explanation of **most** items/aspects' (for mark band 3).

Feedback **must not**:

- point out specific gaps. For example, you must not prompt the student to include specific detail in their work, such as 'You need to improve this by giving more detail'
- be so detailed that it leads students to the answer. For example, you must not give:
    - model answers.
    - step-by-step guidance on what to do to complete or improve work.
    - headings or prompts that include examples which give all or part of what students have to write about or produce.
- talk the student through how to achieve or complete the task.
- give detail on where to find information/evidence.

In other words, feedback must help the student to take the initiative in making changes. It must not direct or tell the student what to do to complete or improve their work in a way that means they do not need to think how to apply their learning. Students need to recall or apply their learning. You must not do the work for them.

Students can reattempt their work on an assignment after you have marked it and provided feedback. This must happen before the work is submitted to us for moderation. Neither you nor

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the student can add, amend or remove any work after the final mark has been submitted for moderation.

Sections 5.4.4 and 5.4.5 give more guidance for students who wish to reattempt or resubmit their work following feedback.

What improper assistance might look like

When we see anything that suggests the teacher has led students to the answer, we become concerned because it suggests students have not worked independently to produce their assignment work. The following are examples of what might indicate improper assistance by the teacher:

- prompts that instruct students to include specific detail in their work, such as, 'You need to include the aims of the activity. Who is it aimed at? What is the purpose of the activity? How will it benefit the specific group/individual?'
- headings or templates that include examples which give all or part of what students have to write about or produce, such as sources of support.

Our moderators will report suspected malpractice when they cannot see differences in content between students' work in the sample they are moderating. An exception is when students have only used and referenced technical facts and definitions. If our moderator is in any doubt, they will report suspected malpractice. The decision to investigate or not is made by us, not the moderators.

5.3.1 Reporting suspected malpractice

It is the responsibility of the head of centre to report all cases of suspected malpractice involving teachers or students.

A JCQ Report of Suspected Malpractice form (JCQ/M1 for student suspected malpractice or JCQ/M2 for staff suspected malpractice) is available to download from the JCQ website. The form must be completed as soon as possible and emailed to us at compliance@ocr.org.uk.

When we ask centres to gather evidence to assist in any malpractice investigation, heads of centres must act promptly and report the outcomes to us.

The JCQ document Suspected malpractice policies and procedures has more information about reporting and investigating suspected malpractice, and the possible sanctions and penalties which could be imposed. You can also find out more on our website.

5.3.2 Generating evidence

The set assignments will tell the students what they need to do to meet the marking criteria for the NEA units. It is your responsibility to make sure that the methods of generating evidence for the assignments are:

- valid
- safe and manageable
- suitable to the needs of the student.

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Valid

The evidence presented must be valid. For example, it would not be appropriate to present an organisation's equal opportunities policy as evidence towards a student's understanding of how the equal opportunities policy operates in an organisation. It would be more appropriate for the student to incorporate the policy in a report describing the different approaches to equal opportunities.

Safe and manageable

You must make sure that methods of generating evidence and approaches taken:

- are safe and manageable
- do not put unnecessary demands on the student.
- are appropriate and in line with ethical standards and your centre's safeguarding responsibilities.

Suitable to the needs of the student

We are committed to ensuring that achievement of these qualifications is free from unnecessary barriers.

You must follow this commitment through when considering assessment and evidence generation.

Observation and questioning

The primary evidence for assessment is the work submitted by the student, however the following assessment methods might be suitable for you to use for some aspects of these qualifications, where identified:

- **observation** of a student doing something
- **questioning** of the student or witness.

Observation

You and the student should plan observations together, but it is your responsibility to record the observation properly (for example observing a student undertaking a practical task). More information is in the Teacher Observation Records section.

Questioning

Questioning the student is normally an ongoing part of the formative assessment process and may, in some circumstances, provide evidence to support achievement of the criteria.

Questioning is often used to:

- test a student's understanding of work which has been completed outside of the classroom (where this may be permitted)
- check if a student understands the work they have completed
- collect information on the type and purpose of the processes a student has gone through.

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If questioning is used as evidence towards achievement of specific topics, it is important that you record enough information about what they asked and how the student replied, to allow the assessment decision to be moderated.

5.3.3 Teacher observation records

You **must** complete the teacher observation record in the set assignment for:

Unit F018 for each student as evidence of the practical activities completed when applying recommended security controls, protection measures, and procedures for secure access, authentication and system use (Task 3 Topic C). The teacher observation record must describe the practical activities completed and how the student applied the required security measures and procedures and whether their use was appropriate to the required task. For this task, students must also provide evidence such as videos and/or photos showing them applying the recommended protective actions and security improvements.

Unit F019 for each student as evidence of the practical activities completed when practical activities completed when preparing and configuring a digital system (Task 2 Topic B). The teacher observation record must describe the preparation and configuration activities completed by the student and whether their use was appropriate to the required task. For this task, students must also provide evidence such as screenshots, photos or videos showing them preparing and configuring the digital system.

Teacher observation **cannot** be used as evidence of achievement for a whole unit. Most evidence **must** be produced directly by the student. Teacher observation **must only** be used where specified as an evidence requirement.

Teacher observation records must be individual to each student and suitably detailed, to help moderators to determine if the assessment criteria have been met. You must follow the guidance provided in the 'guidance notes' section of the form so that the evidence captured and submitted is appropriate. Both you and the student must sign and date the form to show that you both agree its contents. Electronic signatures are acceptable. The signed form must form part of the student's evidence and be submitted with work requested for moderation.

Where the guidance has not been followed, the reliability of the form as evidence may be called into question. If doubt about the validity of the teacher observation record form exists, it cannot be used as assessment evidence and marks based on it cannot be awarded. Our moderators will be instructed to adjust centre marks accordingly.

5.3.4 Presentation of the final piece of work

Students must produce their evidence in the format specified in the tasks where specific formats are given. Written work, including tables and graphs, can be digital (e.g. word processed) or handwritten. If a student's work is requested as part of the moderation sample, a digital version will need to be uploaded to our Submit for Assessment service. You should consider this before students produce their work for assessment.

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More information about how to submit work to Submit for Assessment is on our administration pages. This also includes information relating to the operating systems, browsers and devices that are supported by Submit for Assessment, as well as the file formats and sizes that are acceptable.

Any sourced material must be suitably acknowledged. Quotations must be clearly marked and a reference provided.

5.3.5 Candidate and teacher authentication

Both students and teachers must declare that the work is the student's own:

- **Each student** must sign an authentication form **before** submitting their work to you. By signing the form, they declare the work is their own and any assistance given and/or sources used have been acknowledged. It is your responsibility to make sure every student does this.
- **Teachers** must also sign the authentication form for each student to declare the work submitted is the students' own.

You must retain authentication forms in your centre until all reviews of results, malpractice investigations and appeals have been resolved.

The authentication form is on Teach Cambridge and the OCR website.

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5.4 Marking non-exam assessment (NEA) units

All NEA units are assessed by teachers and externally moderated by our moderators. Assessment of the set assignments must adhere to JCQ's Instructions for conducting non-examination assessments (Vocational and Technical Qualifications).

The centre is responsible for appointing someone to act as the internal assessor. This would usually be the teacher who has delivered the programme but could be another person from the centre.

The marking criteria must be used to mark the student's work. These specify the levels of skills, knowledge and understanding that the student needs to demonstrate.

5.4.1 Applying the marking criteria

You must mark the assessment tasks using a best-fit approach to the marking criteria and assessment guidance. For each marking criteria, select the mark band descriptor that most closely reflects the quality of the student's work.

Each task or sub-task has three mark bands, with descriptors and assessment guidance. Some mark bands have only one mark available. Where two marks are available within a band, these are identified as **just** and **secure**.

Marking should be positive and should reward what the student has demonstrated.

Where a mark band contains a **just** and **secure** mark:

- an answer that convincingly meets the 'secure' requirements of a band descriptor should be placed in the secure category.
- an answer that does not convincingly meet the secure requirements of the band descriptor but meets the 'just' descriptor should be placed in the just category.

Where a student's work is on the borderline between two mark bands, decide which band provides the **best fit**:

- if the lower band is the best fit, award **secure** within that band
- if the higher band is the best fit, award **just** within that band.

If the student's work does not meet any of the criteria for Mark Band 1 (MB1), award **zero marks** for that task.

You should use the full range of marks available. The highest mark in a band should be awarded where the work fully meets the relevant descriptor. This represents the best work that could reasonably be expected from a student performing at that level.

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5.4.2 Annotating students' work

Each piece of NEA work must show how the marks have been awarded in relation to the marking criteria.

Comments on students' work and Unit Recording Sheet (URS) provide a means of communication about assessment decisions made, between teachers during internal standardisation, and with our moderators if the work is part of the moderation sample. (Comments or annotations must not be used as a method of communication with our moderator for any other reason.)

If you have given additional, more specific support or guidance to an individual student to get them started on a task, because they could not start a task or part of a task that was **critical to them accessing the rest of the task or assignment**, this **must** be recorded on the student's work and/or Unit Recording Sheet (URS) for our Moderator to see (see Section 6.3). In this situation, the student should **not** be awarded the marks for the work for which they received help, and the marks achieved must be adjusted appropriately. Recording this on the student's work and/or URS will help our Moderator to understand why the marks have not been awarded.

5.4.3 Internal standardisation

It is important that all teachers are assessing work to common standards. For each unit, centres must make sure that internal standardisation of outcomes across teachers and teaching groups takes place using an appropriate procedure.

This can be done in a number of ways. In the first year, reference material and our training meetings will provide a basis for your centre's own standardisation. In following years, this, and/or your own centre's archive material, can be used. We advise you to hold preliminary meetings of staff involved to compare standards through cross-marking a small sample of work. After you have completed most of the assessment, a further meeting at which work is exchanged and discussed will help you make final adjustments.

If you are the only teacher in your centre assessing these qualifications, we still advise you to make sure your assessment decisions are internally standardised by someone else in your centre. Alternatively, this could be a teacher that may be delivering in another local centre or as part of your Multi Academy Trust (MAT) if relevant. Ideally this person will have experience of these types of qualifications, for example someone who:

- is delivering a similar qualification in another subject.
- has relevant subject knowledge.

You must keep evidence of internal standardisation in the centre for our moderators to see.

We have a guide to how internal standardisation can be approached on our website.

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5.4.4 Reattempting work to improve the grade before submitting marks to us

As described in Section 5.2, before submitting a final outcome to us for external moderation, you can allow students to repeat any element of the assignment and rework their original evidence. We refer to this as a reattempt. A reattempt allows the student to reflect on **internal** feedback, and to improve their work. A reattempt is **not** an iterative process where students make small modifications through ongoing feedback to eventually achieve the desired outcome.

Any feedback **must** be noted by you and a record of this kept in centre. We have provided a set assignment feedback form for this purpose, which can be found on Teach Cambridge. We recommend that you use the set assignment feedback form we provide or create your own recording form.

To summarise, a reattempt is a process that is internal to the centre. This allows students to rework their evidence:

- after it has been marked by you as a complete assignment.
- before it is submitted to us as the final work.

A reattempt **must** be done before submission for external moderation. When a student submits the work to you as final for external moderation, they **must not** complete any further work on any aspect of it.

5.4.5 Resubmitting moderated work to us to improve the grade

We use the term 'resubmission' when referring to student work that has previously been submitted to us for moderation. Following moderation, if you and the student feel they have not performed at their best during the assessment, the student can, with your agreement, improve their work and resubmit it to you again for assessment and to us for external moderation. You must be sure it is in the student's best interests to resubmit the work for assessment.

Any resubmission must meet the terminal assessment requirements. If a student resubmitted an NEA assessment after completing the terminal exams, they would also need to resit the exams to ensure the terminal assessment requirement is met.

Students can resubmit work using the same assignment. Information about how to resubmit is on our administration pages. The live assessment dates will be shown on the front cover of the assignment.

All work for a resubmission must be completed under the required teacher supervised conditions and marked against the marking criteria and assessment guidance. You must not over direct students on how to adapt/improve work to meet the requirements. You must adhere to all requirements relating to giving and recording feedback from Section 5.3.

To summarise, a resubmission is the reworking and submitting of assignment evidence and marks to us, following previous external moderation by us.

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5.4.6 Informing students of their marks

When you have marked students' work, you must inform students of the marks achieved. **Before** you submit marks to us, you must provide enough time for:

- students to appeal the marks.
- you to complete a review and make changes if needed.
- you to inform students of the outcome of the review.

5.5 The moderation of non-exam assessment (NEA) units

There is one moderation series each year to submit non-exam assessment. The purpose of external moderation is to make sure that the standard of assessment is the same for all centres and that internal standardisation has taken place.

Our administration pages give full details about how to submit work for moderation.

5.5.1 Submitting marks

When you have assessed the work, given students their marks and the opportunity to review them (see **Informing students of their marks** in Section 5.4.6), you must submit your marks. The deadline for submitting marks is **15 May**.

There should be clear evidence that work has been attempted and some work produced. If a student submits no work for a NEA unit, the student should be identified as being absent from that unit. If a student completes any work at all for a NEA unit, then the work should be assessed according to the marking criteria and the appropriate mark awarded. This may be zero.

5.5.2 Sample requests

Once you have submitted your marks, we will tell you which work will be sampled as part of the moderation process. Samples will include work from across the range of students' attainment.

5.5.3 Submitting the sample

You must submit the sample work and unit recording sheets using our Submit for Assessment service within three working days of receiving the sample request.

5.5.4 Outcome of moderation

Centres will receive the final outcomes of moderation when the provisional results are issued. Results reports will be available for you to access. More information about the reports that are available is on our administration pages.

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6 Administration

This section gives an overview of the key administrative processes. See section 5.5 for an overview of the moderation process. More information about the processes and deadlines involved at each stage is available from the administration pages.

6.1 Requirements for making an entry

Your centre must be registered with us as an approved centre before you enrol students and can make entries. Centre approval should be in place well in advance of making your first entries. Details on how to register with us are on our administration pages. Once you're approved, you can offer any of our general qualifications, Cambridge Nationals, Foundation Certificates or V Levels **without** having to seek approval for individual qualifications.

6.1.1 Making unit entries

When students are ready for assessment, you must make exam and non-exam assessment unit entries for the relevant assessment series. You need to know the unit entry codes. Students submitting work must be entered for the appropriate unit entry code from the table below.

You do not need to register your students for V Levels.

Unit entry code	Component code	Assessment method	Unit titles	Availability
F015	01	Written paper	Digital systems and security	June series
F016	01	Written paper	Digital solution design and communication	June series
F017	01	Moderated	Application of data analytics	June series
F018	01	Moderated	Application of cyber security	June series
F019	01	Moderated	Implementing digital systems	June series
F020	01	Moderated	Developing digital solutions	June series

- First assessment for exam units F015 and F016 is June 2029.
- First assessment for non-exam assessment (NEA) units F017 to F020 is June 2028.

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6.1.2 Making certification entries

You must enter students for qualification certification separately from unit entries. You should make a **certification entry** in the final series, at the end of the student's course. If a certification entry is **not** made, no overall grade can be awarded. This is the qualification that students should be entered for:

Certification entry code	Qualification title
H101	Cambridge OCR Level 3 V Level in Digital Systems and Data

Certification is available from June 2029.

6.2 Entry rules, including terminal assessment

Terminal assessment rule

The exam units must be taken as terminal assessment. This means that the exams for units F015 and F016 must be taken in the student's final assessment series. These exams contribute 40% of the total marks available for the qualification.

NEA units must be submitted either before or in the same series as the exam units.

Certification rule

To be eligible to receive a result, the student must have been entered for all relevant NEA units and met the terminal assessment rule.

- You can make certification entries for the final series:
    - via Interchange or EDI at the same time as unit entries for the exam
    - by submitting a post-results late certification request via Interchange before the post-results late certification deadline for the series, which is after you have received exam results for that series
- As a contingency arrangement, if you miss the post-results late certification deadline, you can make a certification entry in a future series, provided:
    - no further assessment has taken place since the terminal rule was met, and
    - you are making a certification entry only for the qualification in that future series (meaning you are not resitting or resubmitting a unit in the same series).
- Certification entries and late certification requests are always free of charge.

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Post-result late certification

- Post-results late certification requests must be submitted via Interchange by the post-results deadline for the series. The deadline for each series can be found on our administration pages here: Key dates and timetables.

Retaking the qualification

- After a student has achieved a qualification result, they can resit the exams and submit the NEA units again in a later series to improve their qualification result:
    - students can resit the exams without resubmitting the NEA units
    - students cannot resubmit the NEA units only to improve results. In order to meet terminal assessment requirements, they must also resit the exams if they are resubmitting NEA units.
- The result from the first overall qualification result is used towards the performance tables.
- Please refer to the administration pages for more information on early entry and discounting.

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6.3 Unit and qualification resits

Students may resit the exam units F015 and F016. The terminal assessment rule means that the exam resit results will be used towards the student's final qualification grade and not the best results. **Please see section 6.2 for information relating to our terminal assessment approach.**

Students can resubmit NEA units using the same assignment. Information about how to resubmit is on our administration pages. The live assessment dates will be shown on the front cover of the assignment.

Where a student resits an NEA unit, the best result is used towards the final grade.

You must make sure that when arranging resit opportunities they are fair to all students and do not give students an unfair advantage over other students. For example, the student must not have direct guidance and support from the teacher in producing further evidence for NEA units. When resitting an NEA unit, students must submit new, amended or enhanced work, as detailed in the JCQ Instructions for conducting non-examination assessments (vocational and technical qualifications).

Centres must make sure that when arranging resit opportunities they do not adversely affect other assessments being taken.

Arranging a resit opportunity is at the centre's discretion. Summative assessment series must not be used as a diagnostic tool and resits should only be planned if it is clear that the student has taken full advantage of the first assessment opportunity and formative assessment process.

6.4 Access arrangements and special consideration

There can be adjustments to standard assessment arrangements based on the individual needs of students. It is important that you identify as early as possible if students have disabilities or particular difficulties that will put them at a disadvantage in the assessment situation and that you choose a qualification or adjustment that allows them to demonstrate attainment.

If a student requires access arrangements that need approval from us, you must use Access arrangements (online) to gain approval. You must select the appropriate qualification type(s) when you apply. Approval for GCSE or GCE applications alone does not extend to other qualification types. You can select more than one qualification type when you make an application. For guidance or support please contact our Special Requirements Team.

The responsibility for providing adjustments to assessment is shared between your centre and us. Please read the JCQ document Access arrangements and reasonable adjustments.

If you have students who need a post-exam adjustment to reflect temporary illness, indisposition or injury when they took the assessment, please read the JCQ document A guide to the special consideration process**.**

If you think any aspect of these qualifications unfairly restricts access and progression, please email Support@ocr.org.uk or call our Customer Support Centre on **01223 553998**.

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6.5 Post-results services

A number of post-results services are available:

- **Reviews of results** – if you are not happy with the outcome of a student's results, you may request a review of marking or moderation.
- **Missing and incomplete results** – if an individual subject result for a student is missing, or the student has been omitted entirely from the results supplied you should use this service.
- **Access to scripts** – this free service is for exams officers to download copies of your students' completed question papers.
- **Late certification** – following the release of unit results, if you have not previously made a certification entry, you can make a late request, which is known as a **late certification**. This is a free service.

Please refer to the JCQ Post-Results Services booklet and our administration pages for more guidance about post-results services.

For each NEA unit, a review of moderation can only be requested for the cohort. It cannot be requested for individual students.

6.6 Collecting evidence of student performance to ensure resilience in the qualifications system

Regulators have published guidance on collecting evidence of student performance as part of long-term contingency arrangements to improve the resilience of the qualifications system. You should review and consider this guidance when delivering this qualification to students at your centre.

For more detailed information on collecting evidence of student performance please visit our website.

6.7 Equality Act information relating to Cambridge OCR V Levels

The Cambridge OCR V Levels require assessment of a broad range of skills and, as such, prepare students for further study and higher-level courses.

These qualifications have been reviewed to check if any of the competences required present a potential barrier to disabled students. If this was the case, the situation was reviewed again to make sure that such competences were included only where essential to the subject.

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6.8 Prior knowledge and experience

Recognition of prior learning (RPL) is the process for recognising learning that never received formal recognition through a qualification or certification. It includes knowledge and skills gained in school, college or outside of formal learning situations. These may include:

- domestic/family life
- education
- training
- work activities
- voluntary activities.

In most cases RPL will not be appropriate for directly evidencing the requirements of the NEA assignments for the Cambridge OCR V Level qualifications. However, if you feel that your student could use RPL to support their evidence, you must follow the guidance provided in our RPL policy.

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Appendix A: Command words

Exams

The table below shows the command words that will be used in exam questions. This shows what we mean by the command word and how students should approach the question and understand its demand. Remember that the rest of the wording in the question is also important.

Command word	Definition
Analyse with conclusion	Break information into parts and consider relationships, patterns or characteristics to interpret meaning or suggest impacts leading to a conclusion about the subject(s) being analysed.
Calculate	Work out a numerical answer using appropriate methods.
Choose	Pick an answer from appropriate options.
Classify	Arrange in categories according to shared qualities or Characteristics.
Compare	Provide details about the similarities and differences between two or more items, situations or actions.
Complete	Finish a task by adding to given information.
Create	Produce a visual solution to a problem.
Describe	Give an account that includes the relevant characteristics, qualities or events.
Draw	Produce a diagram/sketch/graph with sufficient detail to show the answer.
Evaluate with judgement	Make and support a judgement or offer an opinion using evidence and reasoning having analysed any information given and the wider context.
Evaluate with recommend	Put forward a justified course of action having analysed the specific context provided.
Examine	To look at or scrutinise in detail.
Explain	Give reasons for and/or causes of something. Make something clear by describing and/or giving information.
Identify	Pick, recognise or name an answer.
Interpret	Use given information to translate meaning, patterns or Relationships.

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Command word	Definition
Label	Add information to given source material.
List	Provide a series of terms or points without elaboration.
Mark	Indicate specific feature or location on given source material.
Measure	Establish a value using a suitable measuring instrument and or Technique.
Outline	Give a short account or summary of the main points.
Plot	Indicate specific feature or location on given source material.
Select	Pick an answer from the options given.
State	Provide factors or features; give short, factual answers.

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Non-exam assessment (NEA)

The table below shows the command words that may be used in NEA assignments to tell learners what they are expected to do.

Command word	Definition
Adapt	Change to make suitable for a new use or purpose
Analyse	Break information into parts and consider relationships, patterns or characteristics to interpret meaning or suggest impacts using a logical chain of meaning.
Assess	Consider factors that apply and which are the most important or relevant.
Calculate	Work out a numerical answer using appropriate methods.
Choose	Provide an answer from appropriate options.
Compare	Provide details about the similarities and differences between two or more items, situations or actions.
Complete	Finish a task by adding to given information
Create	Produce an output or artefact in response to a task or problem
Describe	Give an account that includes all the relevant characteristics, qualities or events
Draw	Produce a diagram/sketch/graph with sufficient detail to show the answer.
Evaluate	Make a judgement about value, importance or effectiveness, using evidence to support your answer
Examine(d)	To look at or scrutinise in detail.
Explain	Give reasons for and/or causes of something; make something clear by giving information.
Interpret	Use given information to translate meaning, patterns or relationships.
Justify	Make and support a judgement or offer an opinion using evidence and reasoning.
Measure	Establish a value using a suitable measuring instrument and/or technique.
Outline	Give a short account or summary of the main points
Plan	Consider, set out and communicate what is to be done.

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Plot	Indicate specific feature or locations on given source material
Recommend	Put forward a supported judgement
Research	Do a detailed study in order to discover (new) information or reach a (new) understanding
Set up	Prepare a system or set of equipment for operation.
Suggest	Give possible solutions or ideas for consideration.
Summarise	To sum up or give a short account in your own words
Use	Apply the information provided or apply prior learning of knowledge, understanding and/or skills. Put acquired skills and methods into action for a given purpose.

We might also use other command words but these will be:

- commonly used words whose meaning will be made clear from the context in which they are used (e.g. improve, test)
- subject specific words drawn from the unit content.

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