

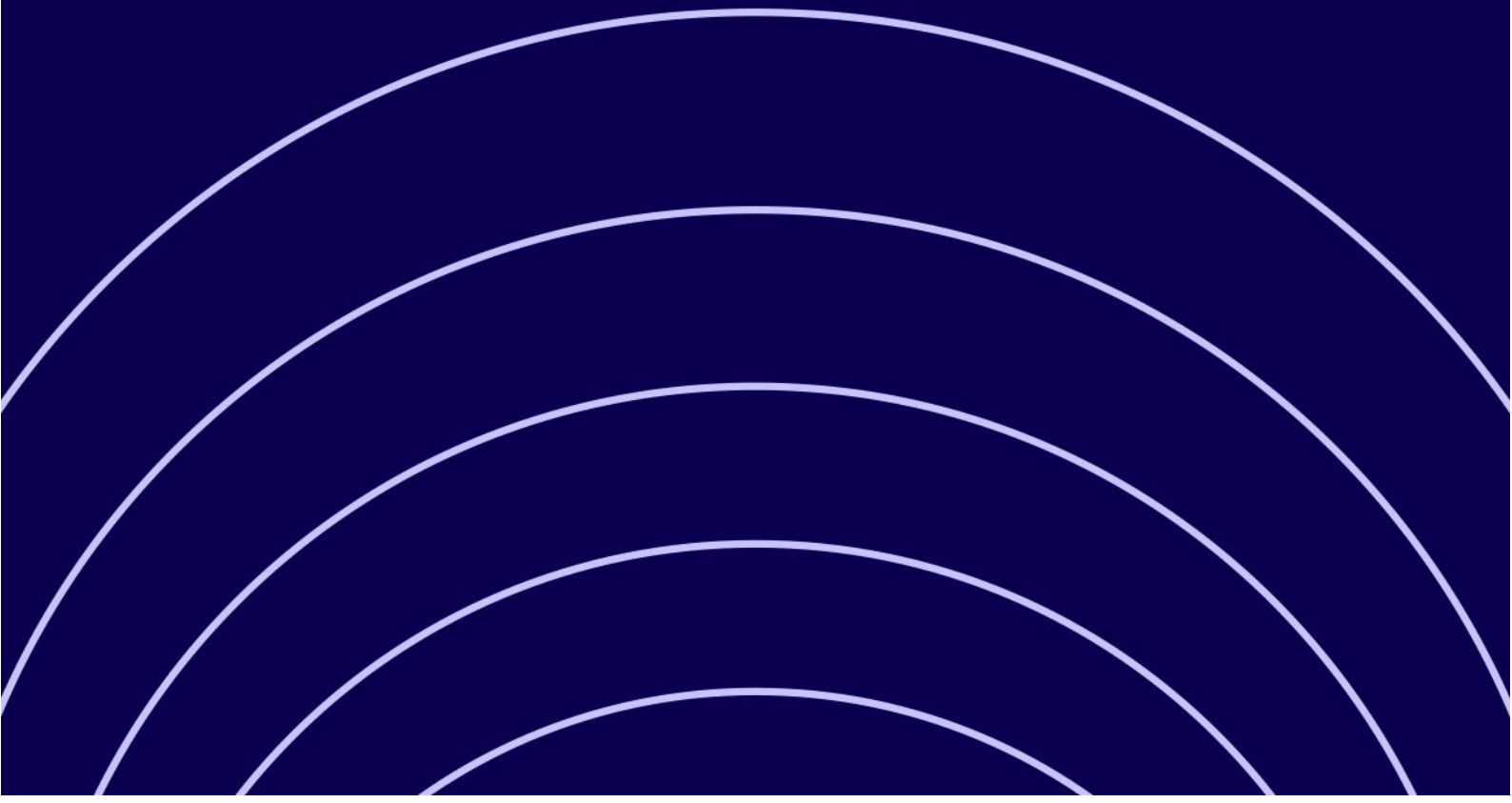


Pearson Instructions for Conducting Practical Programming Examinations for International Advanced Level in Computer Science

Unit 2 – Practical Programming and Problem-solving (WCP02/01)

Unit 4 – Advanced Practical Programming and Problem-solving (WCP04/01)

Issue 1.0



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Introduction

This document provides you with information you need to carry out the practical programming assessments for **IAL Computer Science: Unit 2: Practical Programming and Problem-solving** (WCP02) and **Unit 4: Advanced Practical Programming and Problem solving** (WCP04).

Due to the nature of these assessments, it is necessary to release confidential material to centre staff 2 days prior to the day of the examination. It is therefore essential that centre staff read these instructions for the conduct of the examination before releasing any material to candidates. This is to ensure that the security of the examination is not breached.

We are here to help

Please see our [frequently asked questions](#) and if you need more information, or have any questions about this qualification that require the help of a subject specialist, contact [Pearson Customer Support](#) (Tel Intl: +44 (0)333 016 4160)

At a glance

Activity	Details
Exam duration	Unit 2 (WCP02) and Unit 4 (WCP04) are both 3-hour examinations (single continuous session for each candidate).
Assessment type	Practical programming assessment that requires candidates to carry out programming tasks on a computer using Python 3 in an IDE with visible line numbers .
Secure material release	Coding files and digital Programming Language Subset (PLS) released 2 days prior to the exam.
Candidate materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A hard copy of the question paper• Digital version of the Programming Language Subset (PLS)• Digital versions of the required coding files for the examination• Secure user area login details (if required).
Key controls	The following features must be disabled : <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Internet access (or in some cases tightly restricted)• Collaborative or shared-editing features• Any AI functionality, whether locally installed or cloud-based• AI-driven code suggestions or code generation tools• Local or hosted Large Language Model (LLM) features.
Submission	Zip each candidate's completed assessment and upload via Learner Work Transfer (LWT).

Key documents and systems

Document	Details and information
Examination date	Date on which the examination is to be sat by candidates. You can find details of when we offer the assessment here .
Centre examination schedule form	If multiple exam sessions are required, centres must submit their scheduling timetable for their candidates on the examination day by completing the online schedule form .
Programming Language Subset (PLS)	This document specifies which parts of Python 3 candidates are required to learn. The latest versions of the PLS for Unit 2 and Unit 4 will be available to download from the IAL Computer Science qualification webpage within the exam materials section; in January for the June exams and in May for the January exams.
Release of coding files required for the assessment	<p>The coding files and the digital Programming Language Subset (PLS) document required for the examination will be released 2 days prior to the day of the examination.</p> <p>The examination officer can access these either:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• via the Secure Download Service (SDS) on Edexcel Online (guidance on using this service can be found here) or• downloading the files using gold- padlock credentials from the IAL Computer Science qualification webpage within the exam materials section.
Send candidate completed assessment to Pearson	<p>Each candidates' completed assessment must be zipped and uploaded securely using Pearson's Learner Work Transfer (LWT) system. Guidance on Digital Submission is available here within centre guidance.</p> <p>If there are issues with the LWT system, contact Pearson Customer Support.</p>

General instructions

Start time variations

Permission must be requested in advance if your centre wishes to vary the start time of an exam in excess of 30 minutes. This request must be emailed to uk.special.requirements@pearson.com with the message in the title 'Request for variation to exam start time', no later than 6 weeks before the date of the exam. Security of the examination must be maintained at all times. You'll find examination start time documents for your region on the [international exam start times webpage](#).

Multiple sessions on the same day

If there are resource constraints and centres need to schedule the examination over more than one session due to the size of the cohort and number of computers available, centres must timetable the examination sessions back – to – back on the same day.

Where more than one examination session is held, centres must:

- keep an accurate record of candidates present at each session
- submit a schedule showing the times of each examination session to be held for their candidates on the day of the examination. The centre [examination schedule form](#) must be submitted by 31 March for May/June exams and 31 October for January exams.

It is the responsibility of the centre to inform candidates, in advance, of the time of their examination.

Before the examination – required set up

What the exam involves

Candidates complete programming tasks on a computer using Python 3 in an integrated development environment (IDE) they are familiar with.

Integrated development environment (IDE)

Centres must provide an IDE familiar to candidates that must show **line numbers** and is clear of any previous work. The IDE must enable candidates to create, amend, run and test/debug code.

The following libraries must be installed.

Unit	Library
Unit 2 (WCP02)	Random, Math and Copy.
Unit 4 (WCP04)	Random, Math, Copy, NumPy, Pandas, Dataframes and Series.

The following IDEs are commonly used and centres must ensure that these are used in compliance with the required control conditions:

- IDLE
- Thonny
- PyCharm
- VSCode

Required control conditions (must be disabled)

- Internet access (or with tightly restricted access where permitted).
- Collaborative/shared-editing features.
- Any AI functionality (locally installed or cloud-based).
- AI-driven code suggestions or code generation tools.
- Local or hosted Large Language Model (LLM) features.

Note: basic code-completion tools may be used where they provide syntax support only.

Prepare secure user areas

We recommend that centres give themselves enough time, in advance of the examinations to prepare the secure user areas.

- It is the responsibility of the centre to ensure the assessment is secure and appropriate hardware and software are available to candidates.
- Centres must ensure an appropriate assessment environment. Particular attention should be given to the physical workspace provided for candidates. *For further information refer to the [Joint Council for Qualifications \(JCQ\) Instructions for Conducting Examinations \(ICE\)](#).*
- Centres **must** create a secure user area, such as a Windows user profile or equivalent, for each candidate.
- The secure user area has read, write and run privileges.
- At least 50mb free disk space to allow candidates to save their work.
- The secure user area is accessible only to the assigned candidate and only during the examination session.
- Set up the user area without internet access (or with tightly restricted access where permitted)
- If candidates require login and password details to access the secure user area on the day of the examination, centres must ensure these are received from the IT Technician. These login details are unique to each candidate and need to be placed at the candidate's workstation where they will complete the examination.
- Candidates should also be provided with standard classroom tools as define by the teacher including a text editor (e.g. Microsoft Notepad) and directory explorer software (e.g. Microsoft Windows Explorer).
- Centres must ensure up-to-date virus prevention measures are in place.

Secure material access

- The digital secure coding files and digital Programming Language Subset (PLS) required for the examination **will be released 2 days prior** to the day of the exam.
- The examination officer can access these either through the Secure Download Service (SDS) on [Edexcel Online](#) or by downloading the files using gold-padlock credentials from the [IAL Computer Science qualification webpage](#) within the exam materials section.
- The examination officer will need to give the centre's IT technicians access to the secure coding files including any files with the extension of .db or .txt and the digital version of the Programming Language Subset (PLS) so they can add these to each candidate secure user area. The files are secure and must **not** be shared via email.

Create required folders

When setting up the required secure user area, centres must set up two folders for each candidate as below:

Folder	Details
STUDENT CODING	This folder should only contain the secure coding files including any files with the extension of .db or .txt and Programming Language Subset (PLS) for each candidate.
COMPLETED CODING	This folder should only contain the candidate's new or amended code ready for marking.

Security requirements

- Exams officers are responsible for maintaining the security of exam assets at all times. They must distribute these materials only to authorised staff members using secure channels and never via unsecured means like standard email. Distribution methods should always guarantee that assets are properly delivered into the candidates' secure user areas. It is essential that all personnel involved are fully aware that these assets are exclusively for examination purposes and not to be used for any other reason.
- Candidates must only have access to the question paper and secure coding files including any files with the extension of .db or .txt during their examination session. Centres are not permitted to allow candidates access to these materials at any other time before this.
- Centre staff should not attempt to examine the secure coding files or discuss the contents of the files or question paper with any unauthorised person at any time until all examinations have been completed.
- Centre staff can check that the correct secure coding files (i.e number and names of files) and the Programming Language Subset (PLS) are present in each secure user area, but they must not open the secure coding files.
- Centre staff who have access to the question papers and the secure coding files must not use this knowledge to advantage any candidates by divulging the contents to any unauthorised person.

On the day of the examination

Time and session rules

- Each candidate must sit the full 3-hour examination in one continuous session.
- The exam cannot be divided into multiple parts during the candidate's sitting.
- No scheduled breaks are permitted unless required by approved access arrangements.
- No extra time is allowed for slow machines or networks.

Materials

- If a digital question paper is required, it is released 60 minutes before the published start time for the exam.
- Candidates are not allowed to refer to textbooks or centre-prepared manuals during the examination. They may use the offline help facilities within the integrated development environment (IDE).
- Candidates must only have access to the question paper and secure coding files including any files with the extension of .db or .txt during the examination session. Centres are not permitted to allow candidates access to these materials at any other time before this.
- Centre staff can check that the correct secure coding files (i.e. number and names of files) and the Programming Language Subset (PLS) is present in each secure user area, but they must not open the secure coding files.
- Candidates must not be able to save files produced during the examination outside of the exam user account.
- Candidates may take standard writing items (pen, pencil, ruler etc) into the examination.
- Calculators, whose primary purpose is to carry out mathematical calculations including those on PCs (e.g. desktops/laptops), may be used by the candidate.
- Candidates may use bilingual translation dictionary; however it must not contain or display pictures or provide an explanation or clarification of words and phrases.

For further information refer to the [Joint Council for Qualifications \(JCQ\) Instructions for Conducting Examinations \(ICE\)](#).

Invigilation

- It is recommended that a specialist invigilator is appointed where there is a large number of candidates and where more than one assessment is being conducted. The specialist invigilator should have proven IT skills and experience in conducting onscreen assessments and be assisted by at least one other invigilator. However, they must not be the sole invigilator, a teacher, tutor or a senior member of the centre staff who teaches the subject being examined. *For further information refer to the [Joint Council for Qualifications \(JCQ\) Instructions for Conducting Examinations \(ICE\)](#).*
- It is recommended that should the subject teacher be needed to provide IT expertise for the delivery of this exam, this should only be done on an 'as needed' basis, and only if no other qualified member of staff is available. Subject teachers can only help diagnose the problem and suggest corrective actions to the IT technician. They should then leave the exam room and remain on call.
- Before the start of the examination, under exam conditions, candidates should log in to their secure user area but not access the secure coding files or begin the assessment until the invigilator informs them that the exam has started.
- It is the invigilator's responsibility to ensure that candidates do not use the internet during the examination or in some cases with tightly restricted internet access.
- Candidates are able to run their completed coding through their IDE before saving/submitting the files.

Technical support

- Technical help should be available throughout the examination in case of any hardware or software problems.
- If unforeseen technical difficulties arise such as power cuts, system crashes, hardware or software failures (which may affect individual workstations or the whole network), centres may use its discretion on extending the time limit for candidates. This includes suspending the examination for a period of time to address technical issues. During any suspension, candidates must remain under supervision and examination conditions must be maintained.
 - Procedures for re-starting an assessment after an unplanned break (i.e. a technical failure) should ensure that the invigilator; controls the restart and resets the timing, where necessary.
- ensure that the candidate(s) can re-access their previous responses (where this is technically feasible and permitted by the assessment).

After the examination (submission and archiving)

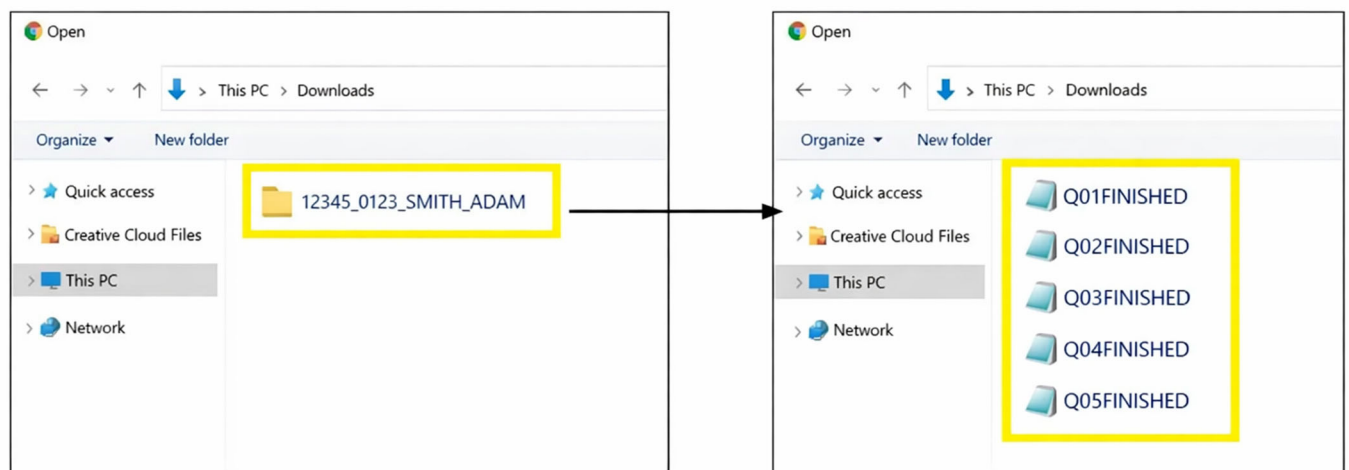
- At the end of the examination, instruct candidates to log out of their user areas.
- Candidates are not permitted to remove any materials from the examination room.
- The invigilators or IT technicians should ensure that the correct folder for each candidate, containing all files created during the examination, is zipped.
- For each candidate's work to be easily identified, the naming convention for the zip folder, should follow:

CENTRE NUMBER_CANDIDATE NUMBER_SURNAME_FORENAME

(e.g. 12345_0123_SMITH_ADAM (forenames may be shortened if necessary but must remain unique, e.g. SMITH_A)).

- Upload each candidate's zip folder securely and accurately using Pearson's Learner Work Transfer (LWT) system. The folders must **not** be transferred via email. *Guidance on Digital Submission is available [here](#) within centre guidance.*

An example below shows a candidate's zip folder containing the files created during the examination.



- Create one secure backup copy for each candidate's zip folder on secure storage, safeguarded by the exams officer in case Pearson need to request additional copies.
- We strongly advise centres to archive each candidate's secure user area in its final form until the end of the appeals period (for missing-file checks and post-results analysis).
- After archiving, remove candidate secure user areas and candidate work created for the assessment.

Contingency measures (recommended)

- Ensure technical help is available during the examination to support with computer crashes and other possible complications. Where possible, this should not be the teacher who has taught the candidates.
- If a candidate requires the original coding file, please contact the IT Technician to place the original coding file into the candidate's Secure User Area. The candidate should continue their examination where possible and return to the question once the file has been placed in the candidate's Secure User Area.
- Should a candidate require additional time due to the impact of replacing the original coding files, this should be arranged under the same circumstances as detailed in section: On the day of the examination.
- If possible, ensure that there are spare computers available during the examination to allow candidates to move to another machine if necessary.
- If there is a power cut on the day of the examination that prevents the assessment from taking place, a [special consideration](#) request should be made for the affected candidates.

Candidates with special requirements (access arrangements)

Centres can apply for access arrangements on behalf of a candidate using the online tool (PAAO) accessible via [Edexcel Online](#), to make an application. *For further information refer to [Pearson special requirements](#) webpage.*

In some circumstances, candidates with particular approved requirements may be given additional time to complete the examination.

Candidates who are permitted extra time should be seated where they will not be disturbed by candidates who have completed their examination.