

Databases: A number of candidates did not seem to have had the experience of examining data in a “real life” context. Others were extremely careless about examining data before deciding on field sizes. Many text fields were left as the default of 50 (or 255 according to version). Much of supplied data was too big to fit into a field of 50. Candidates should have the experience of examining raw data, designing suitable tables and searching, updating and deleting that data in everyday scenarios. They should be given numerous examples of how to organize data into suitable tables, create appropriate primary and foreign keys, and provide a relationship between them. They should use a variety of queries to manipulate data, both in terms of finding existing data and in changing or deleting blocks of records.

Programming: A large number of candidates tackled the major programming problem in a sensible and, largely, successful manner. They seemed to have no problem in completing the work in the allotted time. Where candidates did not make a satisfactory attempt at the programming question, it was noted that many of them seem to have been led to expect a standard simple file read into a single string and were unable to produce any other code.

The transitional period for the changeover from the Pascal programming language to Java has passed. The Practical Exam will continue to present a problem as its main thrust. The majority of candidates were aware of this and approached the problem in an organised fashion, allowing them to maximize on the number of marks they were capable of obtaining. Candidates should be given a variety of small applications to design which make use of standard static data structures and which focus on analyzing a problem and designing a solution. Candidates should get used to adapting their programming skills to a variety of problems.