Cambridge International AS & A Level Computer Science (9618) practical test

These instructions are for exams officers or supervisors responsible for administering the Cambridge International AS & A Level Computer Science (9618) practical test.

Who is responsible for administering the Computer Science practical test?

A suitably competent supervisor, who may be the candidates' tutor, is responsible for the administration of the Computer Science practical test. The supervisor is also responsible for preparing the hardware and software for the test.

When should the Computer Science practical test be held?

You have a one-day window to conduct the Cambridge International AS & A Level Computer Science practical test.

The date of the practical test is published on our website:
- www.cambridgeinternational.org/timetables
- www.cambridgeinternational.org/beforetheexams

Candidates must complete the practical test in a single session.

Wherever possible, candidates from the same centre should sit their test at the same time. If you need to run more than one session, see section 1.2.4 of the Cambridge Handbook.

When arranging the test, consider the time you will need to set up the systems. It is also helpful to plan in some 'reserve' time for additional tests. This is because something may happen that means you have to reschedule a test. For example, you may experience a hardware failure or other technical difficulty.

What do I need to do to prepare for the Computer Science practical test?

You need these materials to conduct the practical test:

Material	Method of delivery
Question paper	We send you printed copies
Source file(s) and **evidence.doc** file	You download from Digital File Despatch

If you do not have all the materials listed above, please contact us:
info@cambridgeinternational.org

There are several things you need to do before the test starts.

Testing the hardware and software

The hardware and software the candidates will be using during the test must be in full working order to allow them to meet all the performance criteria set out in the syllabus. You must provide the computers used in the test. We cannot take into account errors caused by faulty software or hardware when marking candidates' work. Therefore, it is important for the supervisor to work through a past or specimen paper, using the hardware and software the candidates will be using, before the test.

You must make sure the date and time settings are correct on each computer before candidates start the test. The settings should be locked to prevent candidates from changing them. If your computers are not maintaining the correct date and time due to faulty CMOS batteries, replace them before the test. If any computers are receiving an incorrect date and time from a time signal device, such as a router on the network, you must update the time signal device so that it is correct.

Question papers

We send printed question papers to your centre. **Do not open the question paper packets before the start of the test.**

Source files

You must download the required source file(s) from Digital File Despatch. You must store all source files securely once they have downloaded. Files are available three calendar days before the test date window for Cambridge International Schools. Cambridge Associates can download the source files five calendar days before the test date window to allow enough time to securely distribute the source files to their Associate Centres.

The source file(s) will be in .txt file format.

Additionally, each candidate will have a Microsoft Word document called **evidence.doc** for recording evidence of work. This must contain candidate details and solutions, as specified in the evidence document and the question paper.

If you experience any difficulties receiving the files, or opening any of the files, please contact us: info@cambridgeinternational.org

Spare equipment in case of hardware failure during a test

You must have enough spare computers available in case there is a hardware failure during a test.

Secure set-up

Use secure areas on all machines or change the default settings so the candidates do not have access to other candidates' work. The use of a shared folder is not allowed. Each candidate must be issued with an individual password-protected work folder or account for each test. The password for this folder must be unique for each candidate.

How many invigilators should there be for each test?

One invigilator must be present for every 20 candidates. There must always be at least one invigilator who has not been involved in preparing any of the candidates for the test.

In addition, a suitably experienced supervisor must be present in each test room to deal with any technical difficulties. The supervisor can be someone who was involved in preparing candidates for the test. The supervisor must not be counted as an invigilator.

It is your responsibility to appoint suitable personnel, but we encourage you to have an extra technician available, in addition to the invigilators and supervisor.

See our invigilation regulations in sections 4.6 and 5.7.4 of the Cambridge Handbook: www.cambridgeinternational.org/examsofficersguide

Are candidates allowed access to any other equipment during the test?

Candidates **must not** have access to the following during the test:
- internet and email
- their own electronic files or personal notes
- any pre-prepared templates or other files or programs (other than a **single code editor: Python, Java or Visual Basic (.NET)**, and word processing software to open and update the **evidence.doc** file). Please make sure candidates use the default colour theme in their code editor. Examiners must be able to read program code
- textbooks or manuals
- computers that have not been provided by the centre
- portable storage media, such as memory sticks, CDs, DVDs, or hard disks.

This list is not exhaustive, and you must also refer to section 5.1.7 of the Cambridge Handbook.

Candidates are allowed to use the following items during the test, **as long as these do not use the internet:**
- English or simple translation dictionaries
- spell-checkers
- software help facilities
- software wizards provided by the original software supplier.

How should the candidate complete the evidence.doc file during the test?

Candidates need to:
- add their candidate name, centre number and candidate number in the header of the **evidence.doc** file
- copy the program code, when instructed to do so in the question, from the editor into the **evidence.doc** file
- check the indentation of the code
- check that the program code is in the correct answer space
- screenshot the output(s) and copy the screenshot(s) into the **evidence.doc** file when instructed to in the question
- check the size of the screenshot so that it can be seen clearly and that it does not go off the side of the page (needs to be visible without zooming in)
- only include screenshot(s) in black and white (with no colour or highlighting).

Can supervisors or invigilators give candidates any help during the test?

Apart from helping a candidate if there is an equipment failure, the invigilators, supervisors or technicians must not give any help to the candidates during the test.

Can candidates communicate with each other during the test?

No. Candidates must not communicate with each other in any way during the test. This includes using the internet and using email via the internet or intranet. Each candidate's work area needs to be secure. We recommend you do this by setting up individual passwords to control the login process for each candidate, and by making sure only authorised people can access the files.

What should happen at the end of each test?

Check all candidates have saved their work to their test folder using the naming convention given in the question paper **before** they leave the test room.

Keep all copies of the question paper under secure conditions until **24 hours** after the end of the test window date.

Candidates are not allowed to keep:
- copies of the question paper
- any electronic files which form part of the test or that have been produced during the test.

What if we experience technical problems during a test?

If there is a technical issue, you must respond in a way which does not put the integrity or security of the test at risk. If the problem is caused by faulty equipment or software, you may allow the candidate to move to a spare computer, if appropriate. If you can fix equipment or software, you should do this. It is at the discretion of your centre to give the candidate reasonable time to compensate for the time lost while moving them to a spare computer or fixing the equipment.

If equipment failure makes it impossible to continue with the test on the test window day, you must contact us immediately.

If a candidate's work is lost or corrupted, contact us as soon as possible.

How do I submit candidates' work for marking?

All candidates' **evidence.doc** files must be submitted within five days of the test.
You only need to submit the **evidence.doc** file.
No other files are required.
Do not zip the file.
Do not include the program files.
All program code/screenshots need to be within the **evidence.doc** file.

Submitting candidates' work through Submit for Assessment

For guidance on how to submit work through Submit for Assessment, see the Submit for Assessment Administrative Guide and our FAQs, available on our website:
www.cambridgeinternational.org/submit-for-assessment

You must securely store a copy of all candidates' work until the end of the enquiry about results period in case we need it. For example, if any issues occur when we are marking your candidates' work, we may contact you to ask for a copy.