

7.5 Documentation

Syllabus 2026 - 2028

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

- Characteristics, uses and purpose of technical documentation and user documentation
- Components of technical documentation
- Components of user documentation

Documentation is the written (or on-screen) information that explains the system. There are two types, written for different readers.

Figure 26: Technical and user documentation

Technical documentation

For: analysts, programmers and IT support

- Program listing and language
- Flowcharts and algorithms
- File structures and variables
- Hardware and software requirements
- Test runs and validation routines

User documentation

For: the people who use the system

- How to install, load and run
- How to save, print, add and edit
- Error messages and troubleshooting
- FAQs and helpline
- Glossary of terms

	Technical documentation	User documentation
Written for	Analysts, programmers and IT support staff	The people who use the system
Purpose	To help them maintain, repair and update the system, or change it later	To help users learn and use the system and solve their own problems
Style	Technical, detailed, with code and diagrams	Simple, step by step, no jargon

Components of technical documentation

Component	What it contains
Purpose of the system or program	What the system is for
Limitations	What the system cannot do
Program listing and language	The program code and the programming language used
Flowcharts and algorithms	Program flowcharts or algorithms showing the steps of each process
System flowcharts	Diagrams of how the parts of the whole system fit together
Hardware and software requirements	What is needed to run the system
File structures	Field names, data types, lengths and coding
List of variables	The names and uses of the variables in the program
Input and output formats	Layouts of forms, screens and reports
Sample runs and test runs	Examples of the system working, with the test results
Validation routines	The checks used on data entry

Components of user documentation

Component	What it contains
Purpose and limitations	What the system is for and what it cannot do
Hardware and software requirements	What is needed to run the system
How to install, load and run	Steps to set up and start the software
How to save and print	Steps to save a file and print data
How to add, edit and delete records	Steps to change the data
Input and output formats and sample runs	Examples of forms, screens, reports and the system in use
Error messages and error handling	What each message means and what to do
Troubleshooting guide and helpline	Solutions to common problems and who to call
Frequently asked questions (FAQs)	Answers to common questions
Glossary of terms	Meanings of the technical words used

EXAM TIP

Match the component to the reader. A **program listing** and a **list of variables** belong in the **technical** documentation. **How to save a file** and a **helpline** belong in the **user** documentation. Some items, such as the purpose and the hardware requirements, appear in both.

Key terms

Term	Meaning
Documentation	Written information that explains a system.
Technical documentation	Documents for those who maintain or change the system.
User documentation	Documents to help people use the system.
Program listing	The program code.
Flowchart	A diagram of the steps in a process.
Algorithm	A step-by-step set of instructions.
Variable	A named location that holds data in a program.
FAQ	Frequently asked questions and their answers.
Glossary	A list of terms with their meanings.

Practice questions

Answer each question in full sentences. Command words used: State (give a short answer), Describe (say what it is like), Explain (give reasons), Analyse (break it down and examine it), Suggest (apply your knowledge to a situation), Compare and contrast (similarities and differences), Evaluate (weigh up and reach a judgement).

No.	Question	Marks
1	State two components of technical documentation.	[2]
2	Describe the purpose of user documentation.	[2]
3	Explain why flowcharts are included in technical documentation.	[2]
4	Analyse why error messages and a troubleshooting guide are included in user documentation.	[3]
5	Suggest three items that should be in the user documentation for a school registration system.	[3]
6	Compare and contrast technical documentation with user documentation.	[4]
7	Evaluate the importance of providing documentation with a new system.	[5]

Total: 21 marks