



Information Technology



Computers continue to permeate every facet of society and the widespread use of the Internet ensures a need for programmers. The growth of the information technology industry and the increasing investments in IT-related infrastructure and development are pieces of good news for those looking for a career in this area. Computer specialists are in great demand worldwide, so opportunities may also exist to travel and work abroad after gaining several years' experience.

POSITIONS

Programmers work with computer software, usually following instructions in programme design and writing work programmes in the appropriate computer language. Test runs are then conducted so that errors in the programmes can be identified and corrected.

In addition to writing computer programmes, programmers may also assist in systems design and computer operation. Other fields of activity include systems programming (the support and use of operating systems or subsystems) and applications programming (programming in the appropriate computer language).

In some companies, there is a hierarchy in computer programmer positions. Graduates might first start working as junior programmers or trainees and then be promoted to senior programmers. The job levels depend on the size and policies of individual firms.

Computer programmers are often promoted to become systems analysts, who conduct feasibility studies on the installation of computerised systems. They analyse business procedures and problems, and identify the essential features and components of a system, examining the input data available and standardising procedures and workflow sequences to permit the application of electronic data processing systems.

They also consult with operational units of an organisation to ascertain specific output requirements, and then devise appropriate systems and oversee the preparation of programmes, specifying in detail the logical or mathematical operations to be performed by the computer and the operations to be performed by personnel.



The Civil Service also recruits graduates for the Information Technology Services Department for the position of analyst/programmer II. While programmers deal mainly with computer software, systems analysts have a wide range of responsibilities, including both software and hardware installation.

In many large firms, there is an EDP (Electronic Data Processing) department to deal with a variety of computer-related work. Graduates may choose to work in EDP departments of large establishments, or they may choose to work in smaller software houses or Internet businesses, which vary in size.

EDUCATION AND REQUIREMENTS

A degree in computer science or computer studies is necessary for specialised positions. A keen interest in the industry and sound computer skills are sometimes enough for more general positions that incorporate on-the-job training.

For the Civil Service, an applicant should have a degree in computer sciences or computer studies. Positions are open to those with a degree in other disciplines, but the starting salary is lower.

SALARY & BENEFITS

The starting salary for a programmer starts at approximately \$12,000-\$15,000. Software/system testers start at around \$14,000-\$20,000, while technical writers earn around \$14,000-\$19,000. A computer operator can expect starting salaries of around \$11,000-\$15,000, while technical support personnel earns about \$13,000-\$17,000.

FURTHER TRAINING

Employers in both the private and public sectors usually provide on-the-job training and some also send staff on training courses locally and overseas. The Hong Kong Institute for IT Professional Certification offers credentialing schemes on Certified Professional IT (Project Director), Certified Professional IT (Systems Architect) and Certified Professional IT.