

KK11 — Purposes of internal documentation

Programming · Comprehensive exam study guide

STUDY DESIGN — YOU MUST KNOW

- explaining and justifying data and code structures
- code maintenance
- placeholder comments for future development (stubs)

Internal documentation is comments and meaningful names **within** the source code (as opposed to external documentation like user manuals). You must explain its purposes and the role of placeholder comments (stubs).

Purposes

- **Explain and justify** data and code structures — why a particular variable, data type or algorithm was chosen.
- **Support maintenance** — helps the original or another developer understand and safely modify the code later.
- **Placeholder comments (stubs)** — mark where future code will go, allowing incremental development and testing of the parts already written.

Internal vs external documentation

Internal documentation lives inside the code (comments, descriptive identifiers). External documentation is separate (user guides, design documents). The exam focuses on the **internal** purposes above.

EXAMPLE

```
# stub: payment processing to be added in v2 — a placeholder that lets the rest of the module be built and tested now.
```

Key definitions to memorise

Internal documentation	Comments and meaningful identifiers written within source code to explain and justify it.
Stub	A placeholder comment or empty function marking where future code will be added.
Code maintenance	Updating, correcting or extending existing code over time.

Exam technique

EXAM TIP

- Always link documentation to **maintenance** — it's the key examinable purpose.
- Explain a stub as enabling incremental development/testing, not just 'a note'.

COMMON MISTAKES

- Calling a user manual internal documentation — that is external.
- Saying comments make code run — they are ignored at run time; they help people.

Quick revision checklist

- I can state three purposes of internal documentation.
- I can explain what a stub is and why it is useful.

Exam practice — questions & model answers

Q1. State two purposes of internal documentation.

State · 2 marks

Model answer

- Explaining/justifying data and code structures (1).
- Supporting later maintenance by other developers (1).

Q2. Explain how a placeholder comment (stub) supports development.

Explain · 2 marks

Model answer

- It marks where future code will be added (1),
- allowing the rest of the module to be built and tested incrementally before that part is written (1).