Cambridge Technicals

Business

Level 3 Cambridge Technical Business Certificate/Introductory Diploma/ Subsidiary Diploma/Diploma/ Extended Diploma - **05327, 05329, 05332, 05335, 05338**

OCR Report to Centres: 2014 – 2015

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OCR REPORT TO CENTRES

Cambridge Technical Business Level 3 - 05327-05338

1. Overview:

This was the third full year of this post-16 vocationally-related qualification. The number of centres and candidates has grown steadily during the year and this growth in entries has been very encouraging. Most centres undertake this qualification over two years. A small number of centres are delivering this qualification in one year but unless there are sufficient guided learning hours it can be very difficult to achieve the qualification within 12 months.

Centres are reminded of the two main documents that comprise the Cambridge Technicals in Business:
- The Centre Handbook which is the main reference point for course leaders and tutors
- The Admin Guide which is the main reference point for administering entries and maintaining quality assurance structures across the centre

In addition, a guide to the Command Verbs was published by OCR during 2013-2014. It is strongly recommended that both tutors and learners familiarise themselves with the contents of this document.

A number of centres have made use of the support services provided by OCR. These include advisory and subject expert visits for new centres and an assignment checking service for new and existing centres. Further details can be found at: http://www.ocr.org.uk/Images/181287-summary-of-cpd-support-for-centres-offering-cambridge-nationals-and-cambridge-technicals.pdf.

It is a concern that some centres did not access the moderator visits last year and waited until they had delivered the entire qualification before requesting a moderation visit. In many instances this resulted in learner work not meeting the standards. Centres are encouraged to access the two moderation visits per year. Whilst the moderator is not permitted to look at partially completed units, they can provide feedback on the completed units allowing learners to address any weaknesses or even improve their grades at a later date. Moderators can also provide guidance on the units that the centre is intending to offer.

Assessors are also reminded that they are required to complete a unit recording sheet for each unit for every individual learner and provide comments as to why they are accepting the evidence, ie feedback. The majority of assessors are using the forms correctly and providing some excellent feedback to their learners.

Assessors are now growing in confidence with the delivery of these qualifications and look for opportunities to be creative and innovative with respect to how the learners present their evidence as well as considering a more holistic approach. The moderators have stated that they have seen some excellent evidence put forward by learners.

Centres are reminded to refer to Page 26 Section 4.3 of the Centre Handbook which clearly lays out the mandatory requirements for internal standardisation. Regardless of the size of the centre and/or number of assessors, internal standardisation must be carried out and documented accordingly. The OCR moderators will ask to see evidence of internal standardisation having taken place.

The purpose of internal standardisation is to:
- ensure all assessors are assessing to the required standard
- ensure all assessment decisions are fair, valid and reliable

- arrange regular standardisation meetings
- ensure cross-moderation of work between assessors
- ensure all units have been covered across the full range of grades
- ensure feedback has been provided to assessors and documented, eg minutes of meetings, records of feedback, etc
- maintain records of the outcome of cross-moderation activities
- advise centre assessors of any discrepancies in assessment
- suggest ways in which assessment may be brought into line to meet the required standard.

The vast majority of centres are conducting internal standardisation and this has resulted in successful moderation taking place.

All centre claims are made on OCR Interchange and this system is then used by the Visiting Moderator to submit details of the sample required at moderation and then to process the moderation outcomes. It is important that centres ensure that any claims entered onto OCR Interchange are accurate. To help ensure this centres are reminded to:

1. Ensure that each assessor is declared on Interchange and then matched to each candidate when building the claim. Moderation cannot take place as planned if the relevant centre assessors for each candidate cannot be identified on the claim.
2. Check that the claim is free from error before submitting it. All claims can be saved, edited and re-saved before finally submitting it to the moderator, at which point it cannot be edited and may have to be withdrawn in case of errors.
3. Check the Centre Handbook and Administration Guide for full details of the processes and deadlines involved with submitting claims for moderation and for the visits themselves.

There have been a number of issues this year where learners have been missed off (and only noted after the moderation has taken place) and/or the incorrect grade uploaded. A moderator cannot withdraw individual learners and in some instances this has resulted in entire claims being withdrawn and having to be re-entered. In some instances, it has also had an effect on the sampling strategy of the moderator who may have only been informed on the day of the visit that there were errors in the claims.

Claims must also be uploaded at least four weeks prior to the moderation visit (refer to page 6 section 3.3 of the Administration Guide). There have been instances this year where moderators have spent a lot of time chasing centres to upload their claims.

Other issues have arisen from the process of topping up and/or dropping down. In some instances the person making the registrations/claims is not using the top or drop down codes but using the scheme code instead. This will result in a learner receiving unit certification only instead of the full qualification. The relevant codes can be found at http://www.ocr.org.uk/Images/166033-fees-list-2014-15.pdf on page 28.

Centres are further reminded that for each learner submitting units for moderation, an authentication form should be completed and signed. It is not a requirement to provide a centre authentication form, just the individual ones for the learners.

Centres are reminded that it is an OCR requirement that all candidate work has an OCR Unit Recording Sheet (URS) on the front. This sheet includes spaces to record whether the portfolio was used as part on an internal standardisation exercise. In addition to the URS all portfolios should have a Candidate Authentication Statement completed by the candidate. Centre authentication of the work submitted for moderation is given on Interchange before submitting the claim.

Overall, the administration and documentation from centres has been very good and moderators have been able to access the evidence with very little trouble. It is important that the evidence is well referenced and made fully available for the moderator. A moderator does not have the time to look through evidence in the hope that they may find what they are looking for. If the presentation of the evidence is too difficult to navigate, a moderator could stop the visit and arrange to come back at a later date.

2. General Comments

Centres have used a variety of resources to support their learners. A number of centres have adapted existing learner support materials or made use of materials designed for small and new business start-ups. An approach that has worked particularly well has been the use of local employers as case studies, often involving a mixture of visits to the business and/or hosting visiting speakers. Such local organisations are usually an ideal resource for learners when carrying out research for their assessment evidence.

Centres have understandably delivered whole units, typically one at a time. Some centres have been considering adopting a 'project' or 'themed' approach, for example by combining the interpersonal communication units (such as communication, personal selling and customer service) or using an enterprise activity to support the delivery of the more practical aspects of units such as marketing and financial forecasting.

Centres have used a variety of methods of evidencing learners' achievement of the assessment criteria. However most portfolios have consisted of a mixture of written reports and witness testimonies.

A good range of organisations have been used to support assignments. In general small to medium-sized employers (SMEs) operating on a single site in the local area offer better contexts than large multinational or multi-branch organisations. Supermarket chains or franchise-based restaurants are often a poor choice because candidates seem to struggle with identifying exactly what the business is; for example (with some fast-food organisations) is the business I am studying the foreign-owned holding company, the wholly-owned UK-subsidiary or the franchised outlet in the town centre? The benefit with local SMEs is that it is usually possible to walk through and around the business in under twenty minutes and see several different functional areas operating. Such businesses make it far easier for a Level 3 learner to get a concrete understanding of the whole business and how the various parts (literally and figuratively) fit-together.

Most centres have recognised the importance of separating learning and assessment but a number of issues have arisen which may be explained by these two aspects being confused.

Candidate evidence has usually been well structured and organised although there has been a tendency from some centres to include evidence which is either irrelevant or does not fully address the relevant assessment criterion. An example of this is Unit 1 P5 where many candidates have provided descriptions of all of the economic environments listed in the teaching content instead of evidence which describes the influence on a business of two of them. Similarly, for Unit 1 M2 many candidates have provided detailed notes explaining the theory behind the construction of demand and supply curves rather than an analysis of how changes in demand and supply have affected a selected business. Such notes are likely to be an important part of learning the teaching content but do not need to be evidenced when using this knowledge to meeting the assessment criteria.

Very occasionally candidates have provided evidence in their portfolios which has been generated from tasks contained in OCR learner support materials or other similar resources. OCR has published a number of such materials – such as Delivery Guides and Lesson

Elements but as is stated in the Delivery Guide for each unit: "The activities suggested in this Delivery Guide MUST NOT be used for assessment purposes."

In general centres have understood that candidates are expected to apply their understanding of the teaching content, developed through a teaching/learning phase, to generate their assessment evidence. A good example of this was seen in Unit 4 P2 where a centre spent time teaching their learners the different types of organisational structure before giving an assignment containing different organisational charts where learners were expected to identify the type of organisational structure used by each organisation. Candidates who gave the correct name for each organisational structure demonstrated their achievement of P4.

Also on rare occasions the extent of guidance and support given to learners during assessment work has been too great. As a rule learners should be taught all that they need in order to take them to the point where the tutor has confidence that they are ready to complete an assessment tasks; but the task itself should not provide support that would mean that the candidate has been unable to demonstrate that they are able to independently use their understanding to meet the assessment criterion. An example of this is Unit 4 P3 where learners are required to show that they can complete a 12 month cash flow forecast. Part of the Teaching Content specifies that learners should know that Total Cash Outflows are "The sum of all the cash outflows". So learners cannot meet the assessment criterion if, in order to complete the assessment task, they need to be reminded how to calculate total cash outflows. This means that, for example, learners cannot be provided with a template containing formulas for an assessment task for P3 but such a template could have been used during the learning phase to help learners understand how to construct their own cash-flow statements.

Where centres have used Witness Statements the quality and level of detail has been variable. Witness Statements must provide a full description of what the witness observed the learner do. This should be in sufficient detail to enable a third-party (eg the assessor, internal moderator or visiting moderator) to read the statement and be able to form a judgement as to whether or not the observed activities did or did not demonstrate competence. For example Unit 6 P2, when 'presenting complex internal business information using methods appropriate to the user's needs' the witness testimony should offer a description of what the learner did such that the assessor/moderator can read the statement and make a judgement as to the extent to which the relevant competencies (tone of voice and pitch, body language, talking to and engaging the audience) have been met. In general, where an assessment criterion is likely to be evidenced through an ephemeral activity such as a talk or discussion then the teaching content will contain a list of relevant competencies and these should be the focus of the descriptions in the witness statement.

Learners have generally tried successfully to provide original and authentic evidence. Malpractice in the form of plagiarism or collusion (whether intentional or unintentional) is much less likely to occur when:

1. Learners produce their evidence on their own. If learners are collaborating with others, for example in Unit 14 P5 "provide support for the running of an event" the evidence provided for each candidate must demonstrate the contribution of each individual candidate (for example a separate Witness Testimony for each candidate). This is especially important in Unit 15 (Developing Teams) where candidates are required to evidence their own individual contribution to working as part of a team.
2. Learners clearly reference all sources used, especially if directly quoting from a published source.
3. Learners demonstrate their understanding of sources quoted, for example by paraphrasing or showing how the quote can help to illustrate the point being made.
4. Learners do not include classroom-based learning materials, which are likely to have been produced under close guidance from the tutor and are therefore likely to be very similar to materials produced by other learners.

Candidate evidence has generally been sound at Pass (where assessment criteria generally ask for descriptions or explanations) but progressively less secure at Merit (where the main command verb is analyse) and Distinction (where the main command verb is evaluate). As a general rule, learners whose knowledge and understanding of relevant concepts was weak tended to struggle to produce accurate and valid analysis. If the analysis itself is weak then it is hard to argue that the evaluative judgements made are based on valid and sufficiently wide-ranging analysis. The solution for many such candidates was not so much to work on the quality of their analysis or their decision-making techniques, but to greatly improve their underpinning knowledge and understanding. OCR has published further guidance on these command verbs.

It is a deliberate feature of this qualification that centres are entrusted with the prerogative to devise suitable assessments for their learners. The specification for each unit offers the criteria by which learners should be assessed, the relevant knowledge and understanding they should have in order to meet those criteria and the qualification as a whole offers a quality assurance framework, including visits from an external moderator, to ensure comparability across and within each centre.

Centres have generally welcomed the freedom that this approach has given them to devise both learning programmes and assessment activities that match the needs of their learners and their progression into further education or local employment. Centres have naturally wished to clarify exactly how this approach is to work in practice and this has resulted in much discussion with their Visiting Moderator. This is a good reason why new centres are encouraged to organise their first moderation visit as early as possible in the first year, as soon as some assessed work is available to be moderated. In addition, OCR has introduced an Assignment Checking service where centres can submit assignments to have them checked by a Subject Expert.

Centres are entitled to two paid-for moderation visits each year (covering both Levels 2 and 3 if both programmes are being delivered). Most centres have taken advantage of this, whether they are delivering a one-year or a two-year learning programme. All centres are encouraged to make full use of their entitlement as any unused visits in one academic year cannot be carried over into the next.

Centres are required to have in place suitable systems to ensure that all evidence in the centre is assessed to the same standard. Such systems are required regardless of the number of assessors in the centre however a centre which only has one assessor is not expected to use the same internal standardisation methods as a centre with several assessors.

Where there was only one assessor it was usually the case that a colleague (typically with relevant vocational-assessment experience if not relevant subject experience) samples the portfolios. In most centres where there was more than one assessor then it was usual practice for one assessor to take the lead in standardising however it was not always clear from the documentation provided how the various assessors were brought into agreement in the event of any disagreements between them.

3. Comments on Individual Units

Unit 1
P1/M1/D1: The teaching content for Unit 1 identifies features which should be contrasting - these include ownership type and size as well as sector. Learners should avoid discussing businesses that are too similar. For example two banks are to some extent contrasting but both are tertiary and since both businesses are national and merely have local branches, learners may find it hard to obtain sufficient information to discuss the businesses as a whole. It might be better to consider at least one and even two locally based business organisations - at least one small (eg local partnership such as solicitors employing several people) and at least one medium-sized Ltd company would be sufficient for this.

P5 The economic environments that learners should be taught, before they undertake the assessment, are listed in the Teaching Content section of the specification on Page 5 (under the heading Learning Outcome 3).
Specifically, the first three bullets in the list address P5, the next six relate to M2 and the final three points relate to D2.

To meet P5 candidates need to describe the influence of two contrasting economic environments on business activities within a selected organisation. Any of the examples listed in the Teaching Content would count as being contrasting (though learners should avoid discussing "boom" and "recession" as they may struggle to do more than throw their discussion of one into reverse for the other).

At M2 there must be an analysis of the impact of changes in demand and supply on the business - so the analysis should focus on how the business reacts to the changes eg if the business is a car manufacturer and the demand factor is fall in consumer incomes then the analysis should address how this fall in consumer incomes will affect the business - eg reduction in income results in a reduction in demand with possible reduction in prices, possible reduction in cost, resulting in the business switching to selling more lower specification products, a need for redundancies etc.

For D2 the focus should be on an evaluation of the extent to which the business is likely to be affected by changes in the economic environment. eg to what extent is a car manufacturer likely to be affected by a recession? The answer might depend upon: the severity/length of the recession; the market position of the producer (eg a luxury or low-end manufacturer?); its existing financial health etc. Learners could consider the extent to which the business is recession-proof. For example are British Gas and BMW Motors likely to be equally affected by changes in the state of the economy and to what extent?

Unit 2
For P1/M1 - P1 asks for a description of recruitment documentation and M1 asks for analysis. The actual documentation should be that used by the organisation that is the context of the centre's assignment.

Descriptions should focus on what each document contains and analysis could be of the role/purpose of each document in the recruitment process, or a discussion of the benefits/drawbacks of each document including its contents.

Unit 3
For P4 learners must use marketing research for marketing planning. One way that this criterion can be achieved is by applying the methods discussed in P3 to the marketing activities to be carried out in P5-P6. For example the learner could analyse market research data for an existing product to establish its likely future prospects in the absence of a change in marketing approaches. They could then use this information to help establish aims for the products future

marketing strategy which can be used to help determine the marketing mix in P6 and the targeted customers in P5.

Unit 4

D1 refers to the accuracy of 'forecasting' rather than the accuracy of 'forecasts' so it should cover issues such as the assumptions underlying the predictions and the accuracy of any research (eg into future sales forecasts) - eg a business which simply projected a 5% increase on last year's revenue figures and failed to verify if this was likely to be true (eg by considering the state of the economy and the actions of competitors) could well produce an inaccurate forecast.

Unit 5

D1 requires learners to evaluate the steps that an organisation could take to improve the skills of its employees.

The steps an organisation could take to improve the skills of its employees could include:
- training - on the job and off the job
- expecting employees to develop the skills in their non-work time
- raising the skills requirements of the job role (eg by requiring all new recruits to demonstrate that they have the required skills before appointing them)

Other steps are possible and there are many different ways of training both on and off the job.

One way learners could evidence D1 is by taking an existing organisation with an existing set of employees where the organisation decides that the skills of its workers need to be improved - learners should then evaluate the various steps/methods available - perhaps by recommending one or a mix of steps/methods - providing reasons why they steps/methods have been chosen and others rejected or exploring the issues/implications for the organisation and its employees of the steps/measures recommended.

D2 requires learners to consider an existing organisation and recommend ways in which it should improve its motivation systems.

The recommendations should be relevant to the chosen organisation - so should take into account its circumstances. For example if an organisation is constrained by the need to make a profit/surplus it is unlikely that raising employee costs (eg by paying them more) is likely to be a valid recommendation unless it can be demonstrated how profitability would increase as a result. Hence learners in attempting D1 could take into account:

1. the existing methods used to motivate employees in the organisation
2. the impact of these on the organisation
3. any constraints affecting the organisation (and hence the choice of appropriate motivation methods)
4. the likely impact of the proposed methods in the organisation - the more evidence based and less theory based the justifications and assertions the better!

It is important that Individual learners must make the recommendations - they cannot be told what recommendations to make. How and in what ways the organisation changes the methods used must be for each learner to decide. Whether or not they meet D2 is based on whether or not they make valid recommendations.

It might be better for learners to consider a small to medium sized local organisation - perhaps one where the sole owner/manager is struggling to find ways to motivate his/her employees?

Unit 6
For P2 learners must use three different methods (the Teaching Content lists a number of different methods in the first bullet point of the teaching content) to present complex information (types of complex information are defined in bullet point four of the teaching content). The methods chosen must be appropriate to the user's needs - so the centre's assignment must specify the user's needs and the learner must then select an appropriate method.

For P3 the learner must create corporate communications - these are defined in bullet point five of the teaching content. These are going to be different to the communications created for P2. The assignment can specify the methods to be used.

Unit 9
P1/P2: Reviews need to be of a specific product/service for which each organisation has a specific marketing mix - and of course one of those Ps is Product. The learner must then describe the role of promotion (the promotion mix) within the marketing mix for that product/service drawing upon relevant Teaching Content.

Unit 12
To achieve Learning Outcome 4 learners must evidence their role as an interviewer. There is no requirement for learners to be an interviewee. P4 requires evidence of preparing for the selection interview, including preparing all necessary documentation. P5 requires evidence of conducting a selection interview (as interviewer) including completing any necessary documentation prepared by the learner for P4.

The Teaching Content provides a list of documentation and selection interview activities which learners should be familiar with before they begin to prepare for their interview (in the role as interviewer).

The precise documentation and other evidence should be determined by the learner. In order to award P4 the assessor should satisfy themselves that the learner has prepared the necessary documentation appropriate for the selection interview to be undertaken. In order to award P5 the assessor should satisfy themselves that the learner conducted the interview (as interviewer) in an appropriate way. This might also require additional evidence such as a detailed Witness Statement describing what the learner did during the course of the selection interview - or video evidence.

Therefore the evidence provided by the candidate for P4/P5 should be appropriate to the interview scenario given to them by the assignment.

It is not a requirement that a single scenario must be adhered to for all ACs however this would be a good idea as it would minimise evidence requirements for the reasons explained above. If a learner judges that an aptitude test is a requirement then it is up to the learner to decide whether to create or use an existing one (if the latter they will need to adhere to restrictions such as copyright etc).

For D2 learners need to evaluate the strengths and limitations of the process of selection interviewing. A suitable question for an assignment to address this would "Consider your evidence for P3-P5 and M2. To what extent was an interview the most effective way to select the best candidate for this vacancy?"

Unit 17
Learning Outcome 4 requires learners to plan and carry out risk assessment of an administrative work environment. "Administrative" in this context means any working environment where administrative activities take place. So, environments such as reception areas, general office environments (eg accountants, solicitors, school offices) are suitable environments, but manufacturing facilities (eg metalworking or welding) or environments where the main risks

would result from working with heavy objects (eg car workshops) are not. So, in terms of a school then general office/reception areas would be fine but technology classrooms where resistant materials are being used would not."

From the Teaching Content, in order to undertake the risk assessment learners should be taught:
- Format and content of a risk assessment
- Frequency of risk assessment.

Therefore, in carrying out the risk assessment they should do more than simply implement a risk assessment strategy that they have been given. If they are to use an existing risk assessment document then they should consider whether the format and content of that document are appropriate for the purpose they are going to use it for (and adapt it if necessary) and they should also consider the frequency with which the assessment should be carried out (eg once only? If more than once then when?). Alternatively if they are to create their own form and then use it then it is more likely that they will naturally consider these issues.

Unit 18
For P3 each learner will need to independently produce their own project plan. Thus even if the actual 'project' is the same for all learners, each learner's own individual response to the task (ie the requirement to produce a plan) will be different.

There is no requirement that the evidence in LO2 must relate to that in LO3.

The centre should also note that, despite the name given to LO3, there is no requirement for a project to be implemented. What learners are required to do in LO3 is to evidence their understanding of the issues involved in monitoring the progress of a plan - the focus in P4 is on how to monitor the progress of a project against its plan and in P5 the focus is on the action that might need to be taken to help a project proceed according to its plan.

P6: They should design and use a suitable method to report the project outcomes. For M they should analyse the choices made in relation to P6.

Methods of reporting include presentations, reports, using visual aids eg charts and diagrams. The choice of method should reflect the audience (eg a technical or non-technical audience). Learners should choose the method to use and the content to include - they could for example design a report template. Analysis of the method should include a rationale for the choices made eg of format and content in relation to the reporting requirements of the project eg client need.

Unit 19
There is no requirement to build a website or webpages. The purpose of the unit is to enable learners to manage the process of designing and building a website suitable for a business purpose. Centres should note that much of the teaching content is concerned with the design of website infrastructure (eg security etc) rather than just the actual look and feel of pages. The aim of the unit is to equip the learner with the knowledge and skills needed to manage the implementation of a new website for a business. The actual design and build of the web-pages themselves itself is outside the scope of the unit.

The evidence for P4 should draw upon relevant teaching content found under the headings "Aims and objectives" and "design development". The evidence should be a plan for the website in terms of the infrastructure needed - eg security, accessibility, domain name etc (not just in terms of 'look and feel' such as one might find in an Information Technology unit). In effect this plan could form part of a design brief that an actual website builder would need in order for them to be able to design and build specific web-pages to meet this need - however this 'build stage' does fall beyond the scope of this unit.

4. Sector Update

A new redeveloped Cambridge Technicals in Business suite of qualifications has been developed at Level 3. This is for first teaching in September 2016. Further details can be found on the OCR website.

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