

Standards

– the level of demand for

Cambridge TECHNICALS



How was the standard for the Level 3 Cambridge Technicals externally assessed units first determined?

The DfE issued technical guidance for all Level 3 vocational qualifications for 16-19 year olds which needed to be adhered to in order to secure Key Stage 5 performance points. A key component of this technical guidance to all awarding bodies was to ensure valid and robust assessments were created with the appropriate level of demand. This was to satisfy a range of stakeholders that the qualifications are fit for purpose and provide a meaningful progression route into higher/ further education or direct employment.

What steps did OCR take to set a Level 3 standard?

1. OCR recruited senior assessors to marking and development roles who have experience of Level 3 qualifications, both general and vocational. Many of these assessors are practitioners in centres who have direct experience of teaching and assessing these types of qualifications.
2. During the development process, OCR consulted with a wide range of stakeholders, including universities and employers, to ensure that the unit content and style of assessment was appropriate for Level 3 and the appropriate level of demand had been secured.
3. OCR generated performance descriptors to reflect the characteristics of a Level 3 qualification and to ensure the standard, once set, can be maintained over the lifetime of the qualification.
4. OCR developed question papers to reflect the demand of a Level 3 qualification. This was a multi-layered approach which focused on upholding the key principles of good assessment – i.e. a consistency in use of command words (such as describe, explain); appropriate question types; structured and consistent paper layout and the careful balancing of low, mid and high demand questions in the papers to secure an appropriate level of differentiation.
5. OCR's mark schemes were developed with a consistent marking approach. The mark schemes reflect the valid ways that learners have responded to particular questions and the use of 'any other valid suggestion' (or equivalent) ensures correct answers that may crop up during the marking period are not missed. All assessors who are appointed to implement the standard in the mark schemes have appropriate subject expertise.

Guidance within the mark schemes ensures the marking protocol to be applied to individual questions is both clear and transparent.

6. OCR takes into account the Level 3 standard when setting grade boundaries. When producing assessments we ensure there are marks allocated to different levels of performance in relation to the questions set.

This anticipated level of performance serves as the starting point in the boundary setting process which is then refined through the comparison of candidate performance with:

- Level 3 performance descriptors
- the analysis of Lead Marker reports
- the professional judgements of experts with experience of a range of Level 3 qualification types
- the comparison of candidate performance with other similar Level 3 qualifications
- the analysis of cohort data such as age, centre type and past performance.

Ultimately, to secure a Pass, Merit and Distinction grade on any of the units, candidates must ensure that they can demonstrate the necessary depth and breadth of knowledge and understanding in relation to the Learning Outcomes within a particular unit and can apply this learning through the external assessments.

What steps does OCR take to ensure that the standard that is set and maintained over the lifetime of the qualification continues to be fit for purpose?

OCR reviews external assessments on a regular basis. The nature of these reviews can take on many forms including feedback from centres and markers about the styles of questions we use, the type of language and command words we apply or the way the exam papers are structured. As part of our standard monitoring, we will also carefully review the distributions of unit grades and how they impact on the overall qualification outcomes. Ofqual collects this data from OCR and other awarding organisations and uses this information, and associated conversations with the awarding organisations, to inform their future actions.

Vocational qualifications

Telephone 02476 851509

Facsimile 02476 851633

Email vocational.qualifications@ocr.org.uk