

Information and Communication Technology

Level 1 09876

Level 2 09877

Examiner's Report

November 2010 – August 2011

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This report on the Examination provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding of the specification content, of the operation of the scheme of assessment and of the application of assessment criteria.

Reports should be read in conjunction with the published question papers and mark schemes for the Examination.

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Principal Examiner's report – Functional Skills Information and Communication Technology Level 1 and 2

General guidance for centres

Preparation of candidates

The tests set for this qualification require candidates to have the skills outlined in the Functional Skills standards. The standards, and additional guidance on the OCR tests, are detailed in OCR's Deliverer's Handbook. From candidates' work submitted for tests during the period of this report, it is clear that a large number of centres have not accessed this document and have not prepared their candidates to be able to carry out the range of skills required for successful completion of the test.

Centres should ensure that their candidates are prepared with the skills required. The OCR Deliverer's Handbook for this scheme can be accessed by following the link http://www.ocr.org.uk/download/sm/ocr_52248_sm_fs_del_hb.pdf

Resources required to complete the test

Most centres appear to have sufficient resources to allow candidates to complete the tasks set. However a number of problems have been identified as listed below.

- Access to email software.

Candidates must have access to email software to be able to prepare an email during either Part A or Part B of the test. Candidates are not required to send the email, but they must be able to prepare it. The use of an email template within a word processing application is not sufficient to gain marks.

- Access to ICT systems that allow candidates to password protect files and to create new folders and move files within folders. At Level 2 to set up distribution lists and compress folders.
- Access to OCR provided data files

All centres have been providing their candidates with the data files required to complete the tests. However some centres are providing their candidates with both the "Word" and the ".txt" versions. Centres should only provide the data files in the format that is appropriate to their candidates.

Centres should not amend the data files as provided by OCR and should not reformat them before they provide them to their candidates. The candidate has to choose the software they will use to carry out a particular task.

Centres should note that, for some tests, data files should be provided within a folder structure that OCR specifies. Centres should check that files are provided in the specified structure if required so that they do not disadvantage their candidates.

Evidence provided by candidates

The tests present candidates with "open response" tasks. This means that there will be a variety of acceptable responses to any task. However a large number of candidates are failing to achieve as many marks as possible for their work because they are not providing acceptable evidence.

The following table provides some guidance on acceptable evidence for some tasks that have been included in the tests to date.

Task	Guidance on acceptable evidence	Common problems with evidence
Search the internet for specified information.	Screen dump of the search criteria that were entered into an internet search engine.	A significant number of candidates fail to provide evidence of the search criteria they entered into a search engine to find the website on which they found the information and lose a number of marks.
Find the income for a list of items provided.	Printout of the data including the income values AND a formula printout showing all formulas used	<p>A large number of candidates do not provide a formula printout.</p> <p>Some candidates provide a screen dump showing the formula they have used in a particular cell. They will lose some marks because the evidence does not clearly show that they have used formulas in all appropriate cells.</p> <p>Some candidates type out the formula they have used. Candidates will receive no marks for this approach as there is no evidence that they used ICT to tackle the task.</p>
Organise files as required.	Screen dump(s) showing folder(s) created and the files it contains sized appropriately so that folder and filenames can be read.	Most candidates provide a screen dump of their file management. However on a number of occasions it has not been sized appropriately and folder and filenames cannot be read clearly.
Prepare an email for sending.	Screen dump showing email prepared sized appropriately so that email addresses and the subject line can be read.	Most candidates provide a screen dump of their email. However on a number of occasions it has not been sized appropriately and email addresses cannot be read clearly.

Level 1 - Specific guidance related to identified criteria/component

Throughout the tests from November 2010 to March 2011 there have been a number of areas with which most candidates have struggled and have, therefore, lost a number of marks. The following table provides guidance on these areas.

Criterion	Evidence presented that has lost marks	Guidance for improvement
Manage information storage.	Most candidates provide a screen dump of their information storage. However, most candidates lose marks because they have not saved files using meaningful filenames or have failed to save files in an appropriate file format.	<p>Candidates should learn to save files so that the filename clearly indicates the content of the file. While using a naming system such as Task 1 etc. might help them manage their way through the test it does not provide evidence that they can name files appropriately so that a third party could clearly see what the file contains.</p> <p>Although OCR provide data files in a particular format, candidates should take care to save the files they have created in an appropriate format (e.g. as a spreadsheet).</p>
Select information from a variety of sources for a straightforward task.	Most candidates provide a screen dump of the website that contains the information they have found. However a number of candidates lose marks because the screen dump provided does not contain all the required information or showed the information required "by chance".	Candidates should take care that any printout they provide of the information found clearly shows the particular information required and shows all of it clearly. If using a screen dump candidates need to check the size of their screen dump and use cropping tools if required.
Enter, develop and refine information using appropriate software to meet the requirements of straightforward tasks.	Most tests require candidates to use text/data provided. It is important that the data is not changed unless instructed within the test. A large number of candidates lose marks for failing to include all the text/data provided or for changing it inappropriately.	Candidates should make sure that they carry out the task set for them within the test and only make amendments or additions that would be appropriate for the task. They may have to add a heading but would never be required to compose text for the task set.
Process numerical data.	<p>Most candidates make a reasonable attempt at processing the number data provided. However, most candidates fail to present new data appropriately.</p> <p>For example they fail to present monetary values as currency to 2 decimal places. Most candidates fail to enter labels to explain the values they have calculated.</p>	<p>Candidates must consider the new values they have calculated and format them appropriately.</p> <p>Candidates must add labels to explain any new values they have calculated so that it clear what the spreadsheet is about to a third party.</p>

Criterion	Evidence presented that has lost marks	Guidance for improvement
<p>Display numerical data in a graphical format.</p>	<p>Most candidates provide a printout of the type of chart specified.</p> <p>However, the majority of candidates lose marks because they fail to use titles, labels and legends appropriately.</p>	<p>Candidates need to be taught the need to add appropriate titles and labels to charts.</p> <p>Candidates need to be taught what a legend is and how it should be used appropriately on particular types of charts.</p> <p>Candidates should be taught how to use software to add chart titles etc.</p>
<p>Use communications software to meet the requirements of a straightforward task.</p>	<p>A number of candidates do not attempt email tasks. This may be due to a lack of resources as outlined above.</p> <p>Of those who do attempt these tasks many lose marks for entering email addresses incorrectly or for failing to use an appropriate subject for the email or any subject at all.</p>	<p>Candidates must enter email addresses accurately.</p> <p>Candidates must make sure that they always enter an appropriate subject into the subject field of an email. An appropriate subject is one that clearly indicates what the email is about.</p>
<p>Combine information within a publication for a familiar audience and purpose.</p>	<p>Most candidates demonstrate that they can combine information within a publication. However most candidates lose marks for failing to combine that information effectively.</p> <p>A large number of candidates fail to check any data they enter for accuracy and meaning.</p>	<p>Candidates need to know the features and uses of types of publication (e.g. use of presentation slides, use of a letter).</p> <p>Candidates need to make sure they combine information so that the information is clear to the audience (e.g. positioning of information on a poster, font size of text).</p> <p>Candidates need to use software facilities effectively to make sure they manage the margins, line spacing and alignment of the information they combine.</p> <p>Candidates should use sizing and cropping facilities to make sure that screen dumps or images inserted are clear and do not contain unnecessary information.</p> <p>Candidates must make sure they enter standard information within a publication that has not been supplied (e.g. date, address, salutation etc. on a letter).</p> <p>Candidates must use software facilities to check the accuracy of any text they add to publications.</p>

Criterion	Evidence presented that has lost marks	Guidance for improvement
Evaluate own use of ICT tools.	Most candidates fail to review their work to check that it fit for purpose and lose marks accordingly.	<p>Candidates should make sure that they have used page breaks appropriately for the text provided.</p> <p>Candidates should review the way they have presented information. so that is clear to the audience what the information means e.g. use a table to present information about opening hours on different days, check column widths are appropriate so that information can be clearly read.</p>

Level 2 - Specific guidance related to identified criteria/component

Throughout the tests from November 2010 to March 2011 there have been a number of areas with which most candidates have struggled and have, therefore, lost a number of marks. The following table provides guidance on these areas.

Criterion	Evidence presented that has lost marks	Guidance for improvement
Plan solutions to complex tasks by analysing the necessary stages.	Candidates do not have to present separate evidence of their planning. Their planning is evident in the work they do. There are a variety of acceptable approaches to most tasks set. The important aspect is that the candidate reads the task and reviews their work to ensure that they have carried out what is required.	Candidates need to read the task set and review whether or not their outcomes match the task requirements.
Manage information storage to enable efficient retrieval.	<p>Most candidates provide a screen dump of their information storage. However, most candidates lose marks because they have not saved files using meaningful filenames or have failed to save files in an appropriate file format.</p> <p>Candidates have lost marks on some tests when they were required to compress a folder so that it could be attached to an email.</p>	<p>Candidates should learn to save files so that the filename clearly indicates the content of the file. While using a naming system such as Task 1 etc. might help them manage their way through the test it does not provide evidence that they can name files appropriately so that a third party could clearly see what the file contains.</p> <p>Although OCR provide data files in a particular format, candidates should take care to save the files they have created in an appropriate format (e.g. as a spreadsheet).</p> <p>Candidates should be taught all the skills outlined in OCRs Deliverer's Handbook at this level so that they can use appropriate skills to carry out the tasks set.</p>
Select information from a variety of sources to meet the requirements of a complex task.	<p>Most candidates provide a screen dump of the website that contains the information they have found. However a number of candidates lose marks because the screen dump provided does not contain all the required information or showed the information required "by chance".</p> <p>When candidates are required to find an image from the internet and use this within a publication, they often fail to acknowledge the source of that image.</p>	<p>Candidates should take care that they show the particular information required and show all of it clearly. If using screen dumps, candidates need to check the size of their screen dump and use cropping tools if required.</p> <p>Candidates should save the information they have to find in a suitable format that it can be used in subsequent documents (i.e. not as a screen dump).</p> <p>Candidates should acknowledge their sources as appropriate.</p>

Criterion	Evidence presented that has lost marks	Guidance for improvement
<p>Enter, develop and refine information using appropriate software to meet the requirements of a complex task.</p>	<p>Most tests require candidates to use data provided. It is important that the text/data is not changed unless instructed within the test. A large number of candidates lose marks for failing to include all the text/data provided or for changing it inappropriately.</p>	<p>Candidates should make sure that they carry out the task set for them within the test and only make amendments or additions required or that would be appropriate. They may have to add a heading but would never be required to compose text for the task set.</p>
<p>Process and analyse numerical data.</p>	<p>Most candidates struggle to process the numerical data appropriately. The tests set explain what calculations are required. However, most candidates struggle with the logic of using complex formulas (e.g. use of parenthesis, absolute cell referencing etc.)</p> <p>Most candidates fail to present data appropriately. For example they fail to present monetary values as currency to 2 decimal places.</p> <p>Most candidates fail to enter labels to explain what all the values are that they have calculated.</p>	<p>Candidates need to develop their skills in constructing formulas so that they carry out the calculations required.</p> <p>Candidates must consider the new values they have calculated and format them appropriately.</p> <p>Candidates must add labels to explain any new values they have calculated so that it clear what the spreadsheet is about to a third party.</p>
<p>Display numerical data in an appropriate graphical format</p>	<p>Most candidates provide a printout of a chart when required. However, the majority of candidates lose marks because they fail to use an appropriate type of chart and/or fail to use titles, labels and legends appropriately.</p>	<p>Candidates need to learn the type of charts suitable to display particular types of data.</p> <p>Candidates need to be taught the need to add appropriate titles and labels to charts.</p> <p>Candidates need to be taught what a legend is and how it should be used appropriately on particular types of charts.</p> <p>Candidates should be taught how to use software to add chart titles etc.</p>
<p>Use appropriate field names and data types to organise information.</p>	<p>In some tasks set candidates have been required to update a data set to show some new information (e.g. those people from the data set who have renewed their subscriptions).</p> <p>Most candidates fail to appreciate the need to set up a new field/column so that the new information can be added to the data set and can be searched/filtered.</p>	<p>Candidates need to be taught how data sets are constructed and how they can be developed to be used to search/filter information.</p> <p>Candidates should be taught to name new fields/columns with names that explain the content of the field/column.</p>

Criterion	Evidence presented that has lost marks	Guidance for improvement
<p>Organise electronic messages, attachments and contacts.</p>	<p>A number of candidates do not attempt tasks that are set to test this criterion. This may be due to a lack of resources as outlined above.</p> <p>Many candidates lose marks on email tasks for entering email addresses incorrectly or for failing to use an appropriate subject for the email or any subject at all.</p> <p>Most candidates are unable to set up a distribution list when required.</p> <p>Most candidates are unable to compress a folder to attach to an email when required.</p> <p>Many candidates could not use the CC and BCC facilities in email software.</p>	<p>Candidates must enter email addresses accurately.</p> <p>Candidates must make sure that they always enter an appropriate subject into the subject field of an email. An appropriate subject is one that clearly indicates what the email is about.</p> <p>Candidates must be taught how to use software to carry out the list of skills outlined in OCR's Deliverer's Handbook.</p>
<p>Combine and present information in ways that are fit for purpose and audience.</p>	<p>Most candidates demonstrate that they can combine information within a publication. However most candidates lose marks for combining that information ineffectively.</p> <p>A large number of candidates fail to check any data they enter for accuracy and meaning.</p>	<p>Candidates need to know the features and uses of types of publication (e.g. use of presentation slides, use of a letter).</p> <p>Candidates need to make sure they combine information so that the information is clear to the audience (e.g. positioning of information on a poster, font size of text).</p> <p>Candidates need to use software facilities effectively to make sure they manage the margins, line spacing and alignment of the information they combine.</p> <p>Candidates should use sizing and cropping facilities to make sure that screen dumps or images inserted are clear and do not contain unnecessary information.</p> <p>Candidates must make sure they enter standard information within a publication that has not been supplied (e.g. date, address, salutation etc. on a letter).</p>

Criterion	Evidence presented that has lost marks	Guidance for improvement
		<p>Candidates must use software facilities to check the accuracy of any text they add to publications.</p> <p>Candidates should be taught how to save and/or copy and paste information in suitable formats so that it can be combined.</p>
<p>Evaluate the selection, use and effectiveness of ICT tools used to present information.</p>	<p>Most candidates fail to review their work to check that it fit for purpose and lose marks accordingly.</p>	<p>Candidates should make sure that they have used page breaks appropriately for the text provided.</p> <p>Candidates should review the way they have presented information. so that is clear to the audience what the information means e.g. use bullet points to present information on presentation slides, format headings and sub-headings so that meaning is clear to an audience.</p> <p>Candidates should evaluate their use of screen dumps so that they are sized and cropped appropriately.</p>

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