Cambridge TECHNICALS

OCR LEVEL 3 CAMBRIDGE TECHNICALS IN IT

LEVEL 3 UNIT 1

COMMUNICATION AND EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS FOR IT

SAMPLE LEARNER STYLE WORK

VERSION 1

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OCR
Oxford Cambridge and RSA

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INTRODUCTION

This work has been developed to provide examples of the content and standard of work required to evidence the identified assessment criteria. This is one approach that could be used but should not be directly replicated or any part plagiarised by learners.

Centres may choose to identify their own approach for learners to follow but evidence submitted must clearly meet the assessment criteria.

This is not real learner work and has not been standardised in line with OCR procedures; it is to provide ideas and approaches.

The following pages provide examples of how learners may provide evidence for the following:

Level: 3

Unit Number: 1

Unit Title: Communication and Employability Skills for IT

Learning Outcome: 1

Assessment Criteria: P1, M1

Pass criterion P1 – Learners should be able to explain the personal attributes valued by employers.

Merit criterion M1 – Learners should be able to explain the different personal skills that employers may require for specific IT job roles.

Note: There is no Distinction criteria for this learning outcome.

SCENARIO ONE

You are currently working as an IT apprentice in an IT department which looks after a network of 20 machines. You have visited a local Careers Officer who has identified a need for junior network security analysts in the local area. Your supervisor, recognising that you are already learning many of the necessary skills for these roles and pleased to see that you are looking to your future career, has asked you to produce a booklet which identifies the equally important personal attributes required in the workplace for this type of role.

PASS CRITERIA - P1

Learner Evidence:

Sample Booklet on page 5 *'Standing Out From The Crowd'*

STANDING OUT FROM THE CROWD:

BEING SEEN AS AN ASSET TO YOUR EMPLOYER IS MORE THAN JUST KNOWING YOUR MICROCHIPS FROM YOUR MOTHERBOARD.

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Introduction

Although employers select staff who have the technical skills to carry out their role, they also look for other qualities. A recent advertisement for a Junior Network Security Analyst listed the following requirements:

Junior Network Security Analyst

As a Junior Network Security Analyst your role will involve working as part of a team in a large, high availability, E-commerce environment, working closely with the architects on new projects dealing with all aspects of network security design and implementation.

We are looking for an enthusiastic person who has the following skills:

- Network security analysis experience
- Excellent knowledge of Cisco
- CCNA/CCNP/CCSP qualified
- Switching and routing experience
- Knowledge of Checkpoint/ASA/FWSM is desirable
- Excellent communication skills

Most IT professionals do not work in isolation, even programmers. They work in teams but also have to work alone on many occasions taking decisions, solving problems.

If several people with the same qualifications and experience apply for a particular job, it can be the personal skills which determine who will get the job.

The first five skills listed above are role specific; the employer wants someone who can identify network security requirements and issues. However, look at the final requirement. Why are communication skills so important?

Personal Attributes

Good Communications
It is important that you can explain your ideas, outcomes of tasks you are given in an accurate and precise manner, otherwise there may be misunderstandings or even mistakes by those receiving the information. Whether it is verbal or written communication, accuracy and appropriate tone and content is essential. A lack of communication can cause problems, delays and errors therefore costing an employer valuable time and money. Poor communications can also be a barrier to finding a job as employers who receive a badly written or presented application form or CV, or are faced with an interviewee who is unable to give clear and accurate answers are unlikely to appoint those applicants.

Act Proactively
This means that rather than waiting for things to happen or for tasks to be given, the employee is always alert to any signs which suggest that things need to be done and to beware of any potential risks. For example, a computer system may be working well but a technician working nearby recognised the smell of burning electronic components and decided to investigate. It turned out that the power supply was very dusty and had overheated and the dust was smouldering. The technician powered down the system, removed the source of the heat and after some dusting, the system was safe to use. Ignoring the problem could have resulted in serious damage to the computer system if not a serious general fire. This is valued by employers as it is a waste of their valuable time to keep chasing people or prompting them to carry out work.

Dealing with Pressure
The amount of work which needs to be carried out, sudden and unexpected requests or breakdowns can all put employees under pressure. Dealing with pressure means being as organised as possible, taking a realistic view of what is achievable in a given time scale and being able to prioritise competing needs. Dealing with pressure also includes being able to remain calm, not losing one's temper and help to prevent others from becoming so pressured that they are unable to function. This attribute is valued by employers as people who panic and cannot cope with pressure may have time off work due to ill health and this can leave an organisation short staffed. If there are strict deadlines to meet, these could be missed (causing the organisation to lose money and possibly lucrative contracts) and temporary staff may need to be taken on. This can still delay progress as they need time to settle in and learn the job role.

Punctuality

An organisation pays you for your time, it also charges customers for your time and so, if you do not work the required time, you are costing your firm money. Another important point is that, if you are late, you could imply that your time and your interests are more important than the person who is waiting for you or the organisation which pays your salary. To a customer, you appear to be very rude or discourteous. Customers have choices, they can go elsewhere and look for someone who will give them value for money, by working for the agreed hours and also who show them respect by not keeping them waiting. Internal customers may not be able to dispense with your services and go elsewhere but they can complain about your behaviour to your line manager and this could have a negative effect on progression through the firm or, if you are in a probationary period, being given a permanent position.

Team Working

The advertisement also requires you to work in a team. Working with others requires you to adopt or learn a number of skills, which include being able to:

- work with others in designated tasks and recognising the value of other people's contribution
- acknowledge other people's contributions and viewpoints. You will not always know best and so this is important
- share information in a logical and factual manner and in a manner which generates support from others
- admit the need for additional information, clarification or help by asking relevant questions, recognising the key facts and where appropriate making notes of the replies
- influence group thinking by using appropriate language and approaches
- recognise the effect of one's language, body language, decisions and activities on others within the team.

Working well within a team is important to any employer. A happy team is a productive team and this means that the team will meet deadlines, solve problems and work effectively.

Honesty and Integrity

You must be honest in all of your dealings with those you work with or for and you must have high personal principles such as keeping confidential matters confidential, not lying or misusing knowledge or resources. Organisations and individuals are awarded contracts, promotions or roles based upon their expertise but also their honesty and integrity. Those who lie, cheat or steal risk the good reputation of the organisation as well as potentially costing it significant amounts of money. A reputation once lost is very difficult to regain.

Enthusiasm

A company wants its employees to be keen and eager to carry-out every day and one-off jobs. Employees who demonstrate commitment and a willingness to undertake any relevant task can enthuse their fellow workers to show commitment to a task or situation. Those who are unhelpful and disinterested can have a negative impact upon the speed and quality of work of the whole team.

Good Working Practices

Organisational Procedures

All organisations have their own style and methods of working. It is important that employees conform to these, which can include:

Dress Code

Some organisations demand a high standard of smart dress by all its employees, others differentiate between different levels within the organisation so managers and administrative staff will need to wear business suits or uniforms but technical staff will be expected to wear the company polo shirt and trousers. It will not impress prospective employers or your own employer if you turn up wearing jeans and a t-shirt with a comment on your drinking habits because, "Apple staff do", if you are working for a firm of corporate solicitors.

Answering the telephone

Some organisations demand a given response time to internal and external customers, usually calculated in rings. So, for an external customer, you may be expected to answer within four rings or less; for an internal customer, six rings may be appropriate. Failure to meet these requirements on a regular basis could give rise to a warning or other disciplinary action being taken.

Core hours

When flexi-time is permitted it is normal practice for the employee to be present for core hours such as 10 until 4. This is to ensure that the smooth-running of the organisation is not affected by the absence of key employees.

Health and Safety

Health and safety laws and regulations affect all organisations and employees are expected to abide by them. Heavy lifting, for example, where staff may have to move heavy loads such as printers and computer systems, staff need to be taught how to lift and move equipment safely without risking injury to themselves or others.

Health and Safety continued
Using Computer equipment or computer ergonomics as it is often known, is another area where staff are made aware of the need to sit correctly, ensure that their working space is uncluttered and that they do not sit looking at a computer screen for a period of approximately 20 minutes at a time, etc.

Failure to comply with these and other relevant health and safety requirements can have serious implications for the organisation in terms of fines, even imprisonment of staff if the failures cause loss of life and a loss of reputation. It can also cause injury or death to the employee.

Prospective employees should demonstrate an awareness of the health and safety requirements in the area in which they are seeking employment.

IT Knowledge and Skills

Education and Training
Depending upon the role and the level within an organisation this can be user qualifications such as IT User at levels 1 to 3 for example, IT technical qualifications such as NVQs in IT Practitioner and Professional, taught qualifications such as PROCOM or Degrees such as BSc Computer Science, MSC Software Design. The precise nature of the educational requirements will depend upon the role for which you are applying.

Software knowledge and experience
Again, this depends upon the specific role but may include:

- Operating systems such as Windows 7, Linux, Unix or OS X Lion.
- User packages such as Microsoft Office, Adobe Creative Suite,
- Programming languages such as C++, Visual Basic, object Pascal, XHTML, OOP, SQL
- Domain registration.

SCENARIO ONE

Having produced your booklet 'Standing out from the Crowd', your supervisor is so impressed she has asked you to add a section on the personal skills required for three new and different IT roles within your organisation.

MERIT CRITERIA - M1

Learner Evidence:

Personal Skills for Specific IT Job roles
All IT roles will obviously require some similar personal attributes but others will be specific to the job role.

Let us consider three different roles:

- **IT Service Desk Analyst**
- **Web Programmer/Developer**
- **IT Project Officer**

Communication Skills
All three job roles require very good communication skills, even web programmers do not work entirely alone in a dimly lit room they often work in teams. Therefore it is important that they communicate their knowledge, ideas and recommendations coherently and accurately. They need good communication skills so that they can talk to their customers, ask them questions, provide them with guidance and/or explanations.

Problem solving is another universal requirement, all three roles require problems to be solved.

- The **IT Service Desk Analyst** on behalf of the customer. They customer will tell them about their problem and the IT Service Desk Analyst will try to solve it.
- The **Web Programmer/Developer** for solutions to errors in programming or pushing the boundaries of knowledge and experience.
- The **IT Project Officer** because all projects include technology, people and resources and each one is subject to errors, omissions and other problems.

Team Working
Not all of these job roles always work as part of a team eg IT Service Desk Analyst may primarily work alone and therefore team working is less important that for the IT Project Officer who will be working on projects which involved a number of people. Some will be part of the IT Project Officer's team, whilst others may be an "extended part" of the team. All have roles to play and can influence the outcome. Team workers should also have good communication skills. A Web Programmer/Developer is another person who may sometimes work alone (self-employed and working from home), or they could be part of a larger organisation who specialises in developing websites. In this case, there could be a number of people working as part of a team on a number of web development projects.

Leadership Qualities
An IT Project Officer will require good leadership skills as they will usually have to lead others in order to implement the requirements of a project and keep it on track to reach deadlines. An IT Service Desk Analyst and/or Web Programmer/Developer are less likely to lead teams and therefore these skills are not so important.

Good Organisational Skills
All three job roles require good organisational skills as they all need to organise and plan their work in order to complete tasks on time and keep to any deadlines, time constraints. They should also be able to give the employer an immediate update on the progress of any work activity.

Each role, however, has a different focus on the technical requirements. We will look at each one in turn.

IT Service Desk Analyst

This role requires:
- CLAIT, ECDL or working towards this level of ICT. This means that the **IT Service Desk Analyst** will have a minimum knowledge of major user software applications and functions.
- Experience of Windows 7, Microsoft Office, email and other leading PC packages. This ensures that the **IT Service Desk Analyst** will be able to identify problems for the user and their use of the software. The **IT Service Desk Analyst** will be able to give advice on how the software supports a particular requirement or if it does not, how the user may create a solution to the problem.
- A good understanding of security issues including SPAM, viruses, computer misuse and abuse. This will enable the **IT Services Desk Analyst** to identify a security problem or a potential threat and give appropriate advice. Computer misuse and abuse can be a criminal offence and the **IT Services Desk Analyst** needs to be able to identify potential or actual infringements and inform the client and management accordingly.

It is important that a good IT service desk analyst gains the trust and confidence of the person who is calling for help. Therefore it is important that they have **good communication skills** which includes active listening ie taking note of exactly what the customer is saying, and good questioning techniques ie using open and/or probing questions in order to find out exactly what the problem is.

The IT service desk analyst must have **good organisational skills** as they usually have to keep detailed records of their interactions with the customers. The records will normally contain the frequency of the enquiries, the types of questions and complaints and how quickly they were resolved and how.

They must have **good problem solving skills** as the customer will be expecting them to solve their IT problem. They need to be logical with their thinking and formulate a clear strategy for tackling the problem

It is also important that the IT service desk analyst is **patient and compassionate.** Customers are often confused, frustrated, upset or even angry. It is important that they keep calm and gain the respect of the customer so that they can identify the exact problem and consider the options for resolution.

The IT service desk analyst must use **good working practices**. They must ensure that whatever advice and/or instruction that they give to their customers, that they do not put them at risk of injury or of breaking the law.

Web Programmer/Developer

This role requires:
- A working knowledge of XHTML, CSS, OOP, Javascript and MySQL. This is a range of software and languages and object oriented paradigm (Object Oriented Programming). The languages are those used predominantly to develop and maintain websites and are an essential part of the programmer/developer tool kit. Without this fundamental knowledge and experience, the **Web Programmer/Developer** would be unable to carry out the role.
- A working knowledge of Google products and domain management. **The Web Programmer/Developer** must be able to enable the website to link to and work with other products.

It is important that a web programmer/developer is:
- **Creative and imaginative** as they need to come up with ideas and designs that will make their clients' websites attractive, appealing and informative
- **Able to work autonomously and/or as part of a team.** There could be times when they will work solely on a web project and therefore have to ensure that they adhere to timescales and meet the commitments agreed with their customer. They may work as part of a team and there may be people within the team who are relying on the web programmer/developer completing their own particular tasks before they can begin their own. They need to be able to communicate with the team members for example, to tell them if there are going to be delays, when they have completed their tasks or even to discuss a problem that they have identified
- **Can multi-task** as they may need to work on a number of different aspects of the work at the same time in order to meet the tight deadlines that are usually imposed.
- **Conversant with organisational procedures and relevant legislation**. They must ensure that they use good working practices and adhere to any legislation and regulation.

IT Project Officer

This role is rather different. It requires an individual with the necessary experience and knowledge to be able talk confidently to senior managers and manage a team. The **IT Project Officer** not only has project management skills but also a high standard of IT knowledge and experience. This allows them to be proactive, problem-solve from a position of strength and lead a team of professionals by demonstrating professional competence.

An IT project officer requires:
- Project management experience in an IT environment so as to be able to understand the special requirements of IT.
- Graduate level academic, professional or vocational qualifications in IT. This is a high level of qualification.
- Qualified in using PRINCE 2 (project management methodology).
- Wide technical experience to support technical decision making.
- **Good leadership qualities** – this is because they need to be able to command respect and lead a team of people to carry out the various tasks to complete the project.
- **Good planning and organisation skills.** A project officer is responsible for the planning or the project which includes equipment, workforce, costings, timescales etc. It is important that they then organise the project so that there is minimal disruption to the organisation and the workflow.
- **Good written, numerical and verbal skills**, they need to produce reports about the project and be able to perform a range of calculations eg costing out the project. Verbal communication skills are also important as they need to be able to communicate effectively with the team, suppliers, the managers etc.
- **Good health and safety awareness.** During any project it is always important that the safety of the team and other people within the working environment are safe at all times.

CONTACT US

Staff at the OCR Customer Contact Centre are available to take your call between 8am and 5.30pm, Monday to Friday.

We're always delighted to answer questions and give advice.

Telephone 02476 851509
Email cambridgetec@ocr.org.uk
www.ocr.org.uk