

## **Cambridge Nationals**

### **ICT**

Level 1/2 Cambridge National Award in ICT **J800**

Level 1/2 Cambridge National Certificate in ICT **J810**

Level 1/2 Cambridge National Diploma in ICT **J820**

## **OCR Report to Centres November 2014**

OCR (Oxford Cambridge and RSA) is a leading UK awarding body, providing a wide range of qualifications to meet the needs of candidates of all ages and abilities. OCR qualifications include AS/A Levels, Diplomas, GCSEs, Cambridge Nationals, Cambridge Technicals, Functional Skills, Key Skills, Entry Level qualifications, NVQs and vocational qualifications in areas such as IT, business, languages, teaching/training, administration and secretarial skills.

It is also responsible for developing new specifications to meet national requirements and the needs of students and teachers. OCR is a not-for-profit organisation; any surplus made is invested back into the establishment to help towards the development of qualifications and support, which keep pace with the changing needs of today's society.

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.

OCR will not enter into any discussion or correspondence in connection with this report.

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## **CONTENTS**

### **Cambridge Nationals**

Level 1/2 Cambridge National Award in ICT **J800**

Level 1/2 Cambridge National Certificate in ICT **J810**

Level 1/2 Cambridge National Diploma in ICT **J820**

### **OCR REPORT TO CENTRES**

#### **Content**

#### **Page**

Moderated units (R002 – R011)

1

## Moderated units (R002 – R011)

Only moderated units, submitted either by post or through the use of the OCR Repository, are included in the November series. Unit-specific comments at the end of this report cover units R002 to R007 as entries for other units were not high enough to make detailed comments possible.

Most of the issues identified by moderators were similar to those seen in previous series and centres are recommended to refer to previous Chief Examiner's reports for commonly occurring issues.

Whilst most centres submitted their marks to OCR by the required deadline, many did not send the moderator copies and Centre Authentication Form (CCS160) at the same time. This process is explained in Section 8.6 of the 2014-15 Admin Guide and Entry Codes document for Cambridge Nationals qualifications. Centres are requested not to wait until the sample is requested before sending this information to the moderator. Centres are reminded that where there are 15 or fewer candidates, the work of all candidates should be sent to the moderator, without waiting for a sample request email.

Where repository entries were made, some problems were encountered because files were not uploaded using the naming convention outlined in the OCR Repository Centre User Guide. If loading files for multiple candidates, they must be named using the following format: 4-digit candidate number followed by an underscore, followed by any other text. For example: 1001\_specification. This is so the system can 'map' the file to the correct candidate. In this series, several centres had to be asked to re-upload their candidate work to ensure the correct files could be seen by the moderator for each candidate. Some centres experienced difficulties uploading files to the repository because they exceeded the 20Mb limit. In such cases a postal entry can be made and files submitted on DVD/memory stick.

Most centres correctly completed an OCR Unit Recording Sheet (URS) for each candidate to show the marks allocated. For repository entries these should be uploaded with the candidate files, rather than in the administration area. Where centre staff added comments to show why each mark had been awarded and where specific evidence could be found this helped the moderator agree with centre marking and provided more detailed and relevant feedback.

Some candidates demonstrated a good range of software skills and creative thinking, especially in the optional units, although the documentation produced by candidates did not always match the quality of their final products, with specifications and testing often being weaker areas.

There was concern that candidates from some centres had been provided with additional materials and guidance, over and above that which is permitted. Whilst formative assessment should be an integral part of any teaching programme, formal assessment for this qualification must be summative, i.e. it must take place once the candidates have completed their learning and are considered to be in a position to undertake the assignment independently. Candidates should be provided with the OCR Model assignment and a copy of the marking criteria for the unit when completing the assessment and teachers may explain the marking criteria to them. Centre staff may give candidates support and guidance that focuses on checking that they understand what is expected of them and giving general feedback that enables them to take the initiative in making improvements, rather than detailing what amendments should be made. Writing frames and specific design guidance must not be provided.

Some printed evidence, most particularly where this was contained within screenshots, PowerPoint slides and/or spreadsheets, could not be read by the moderator because it was too small or because of insufficient colour contrast and/or draft printing. Centres should ensure all

evidence sent to the moderator can be easily and clearly read. In some cases this can be achieved by supplementing printed evidence with electronic files. Some centres submitting electronic evidence included scans of hand-drawn designs which were of insufficient quality for details to be read. Centres are reminded that they must send to the moderator the same evidence that has been used within the centre for assessment purposes. In some cases centre comments suggested that internal marks had been awarded on the strength of evidence other than that sent to the moderator.

Problems were encountered with electronic evidence submitted by some centres where the guidance in Appendix C of the specification had not been followed. It is essential that clear guidance is provided to moderators to show which files need to be opened, in which order, for each section of the marking criteria. Where the files are not clearly indexed, this information can be provided using the Unit Recording Sheets. Some files could not be opened by moderators, usually because the file format was not appropriate. Some files required non-standard fonts and so could not be opened as needed. Where candidates had been taught to export documents into PDF format this generally solved any compatibility issues.

Some centres' marking was found to be over-generous at the higher levels because key words such as 'most', 'thorough' and 'detailed' had been misinterpreted. The glossary in Appendix D of the specification document provides useful guidelines in the interpretation of key words used in the assessment criteria for the units.

Many centres are now relying on electronic files for evidence, in postal submissions as well as those using the OCR repository. Some centres submitting work electronically by post also included printed copies of the URS for each candidate in the sample, which was much appreciated by moderators. Centres are reminded that postal submissions allow a mixture of paper-based and electronic evidence, so there is no need to scan hand-drawn designs, so long as any hard-copy materials are clearly labelled to show which candidate they belong to and what evidence they include.

### **Specific comments on the units submitted.**

#### **Unit R002**

As the only mandatory unit for both Award and Certificate, this unit comprised the majority of entries this series.

A number of centres had used the newer 'JB Clothing Emporium' ('Tailored Tops') assignment whilst the majority had used the original 'MStreamIT' assignment. Both continue to be acceptable. Both assignments provide a vocational scenario within which the work should be carried out. Where candidates remained aware of this throughout their work they generally produced more appropriate outcomes.

Some problems were encountered where no evidence could be found to support criteria credited by the centre, most particularly in Learning Outcome 1, where the file structure and search criteria used need to be assessed. Centres are reminded that moderators can only make judgements on evidence that is submitted. Centre staff may advise candidates about the evidence they need to provide in their portfolios, as outlined in section 3 of the Tutor Notes within the Model Assignment. If candidates do not provide screenshot evidence of their folder and filing structure, teachers can supplement printed evidence with the electronic files from candidates' user areas if necessary. Whilst writing frames may not be used, centres should remind candidates of the need to provide evidence of search criteria used. Where candidates' evidence of filing structures showed folders but not the files within them, it was often not possible to agree centre assessment decisions.

Many candidates chose to use standard source tables to show their sources of information and were often disadvantaged by this choice, as the headings on a standard table are unlikely to fully match the specific requirements of an assignment. In most cases candidates using such generic tables identified the URL and whether or not the item was copyrighted but did not identify any details of the copyright holder, which is what the assignment and marking criteria require. Since it is not permissible for a centre to provide specific writing frames for an assignment and a standard source table is unlikely to fully meet requirements, centres might wish to advise candidates not to use standard source tables but to create their own documents from scratch – this would have the added advantage that if they chose to create a table they would be demonstrating additional capability within Learning Outcome 3. Some candidates were over-generously credited with understanding copyright when they provided details from third-party websites rather than copyright holders.

Some centres awarded marks over-generously in Learning Outcome 2 when candidates had completed all the data handling tasks but not obtained accurate results. Centres are advised to work through the tasks themselves, to enable them to check the accuracy of candidates' results.

Although candidates from some centres using the MStreamIT assignment created a range of different products for the item of publicity required in Task 2, most submissions were limited to one style of item, often a simple page of text and graphics, sometimes with no obvious function. This demonstrated little creative thought on the part of the candidates and often limited the range of file types produced. It is expected that candidates will have been taught the range of software tools listed in the specification, allowing them to select the type of promotional item they think will be most effective.

Candidates using the JB Clothing Emporium assignment generally created some creative PowerPoint slideshows, although some merely copied the instructions rather than creating their own text that met the client's requirements.

There are some generally agreed standards for a business letter and many candidates were over-generously assessed when their letters would not have been acceptable in a business environment.

Marks in the highest mark band of Learning Outcome 4 were sometimes over-generously awarded by centres when candidates had used only a limited number of formatting tools and, whilst what they had done had enhanced the readability of the work, much more could have been done to make it more appropriate. The specification provides a list of formatting techniques that candidates should be taught and it is expected that a wide range of techniques will be evident in the work of candidates scoring highly in this area. Where candidates had used formatting to improve some, but not all, of their work, full marks in Mark Band 2 were sometimes over-generously awarded by the centre.

The level of independence when formatting work is assessed in Learning Outcome 4. Many centres provided no evidence for this. Where centres made a comment on the Unit Recording Sheet that clarified any support given, this was helpful and appropriate.

### **Unit R003**

Most centres appropriately provided the electronic spreadsheet file as part of the evidence for this assignment. Where this was not provided it was not always possible to clearly ascertain the overall structure created by candidates, nor the consistency and appropriateness with which some tools, e.g. validation, comments and conditional formatting, had been used. The overall appropriateness of the final product is key to assessment, rather than simply evidence of using different tools. When sending electronic files, centres are requested to inform the moderator of the version of software used, as some features such as drop-down lists may not work on earlier versions than that used by the candidates.

Many candidates produced effective solutions that met many of the requirements in the model assignment, although few considered the issue of enabling new customers and new products to be added. Where macros were included these were largely for fairly generic purposes such as navigation between sheets and simple routines such as saving and printing. Some created macros for routines such as printing for which there is already a software button, in which case they added little if any functionality to the solution.

A few candidates had given a lot of thought to ways in which their solutions could be made user friendly, but most solutions could have been significantly improved in this area and marks in band 3 of Learning Outcome 1 were often over-generously awarded by centres. Whilst most candidates were able to apply formatting to emphasise headings, etc. in their spreadsheets, few used it well to help users understand how to use the spreadsheet, e.g. to identify clearly those cells where data needed to be entered and those which contained formulae and so would be automatically updated. Use of comments and input/error messages was often limited and few candidates added any instructions/explanations for the user. The best solutions ensured that the invoice would fit onto a sheet of paper when printed, with some candidates adding appropriate headers/footers.

Candidates did not always provide explanations for their choices of formulae and modelling techniques that matched the quality of their solutions, thereby lowering their overall mark. Centres often over-generously awarded marks where candidates had described what they had done or what a formula did rather than explaining why these methods/tools had been used. An efficient solution is one where the user is not expected to enter any more data than is necessary and is not required ever to edit formulae, also where functions are used correctly and where future changes, e.g. VAT rate, discount policies and delivery policies, can be made easily by the user. Many candidates appear to be confused about the use of the SUM function, using it unnecessarily in most, or all of their arithmetic formulae. Candidates who had used LOOKUP functions in their invoice but had no method of avoiding errors if lines were blank were sometimes over-generously assessed by centres.

The first part of Learning Outcome 3 – sorting, filtering and creating graphs – was generally completed very well by candidates and assessed accurately by centres, although some candidates did not provide clear evidence of the outcome of their sorting and filtering. Most candidates attempted some of the modelling scenarios, although few provided a range of solutions where these were required. Where candidates did provide a range of solutions they rarely considered how to present this information to the customer, although some did use the scenario manager tool, which summarised the results, albeit usually requiring a little additional explanation to enable them to be fully understood. Marks in this last section of Learning Outcome 3 were often limited by a lack of explanation of the results and of the tools used. Many candidates appropriately used the goal-seek tool, but candidates from some centres were over-generously assessed when they had not made any use of advanced modelling tools such as this.

#### **R004**

Where candidates submitted their final databases in electronic format this provided the clearest evidence of the structure of their solution, including all field names, types, lengths and validation/input masks used, which is difficult to achieve in a purely paper-based portfolio. Centres are requested to provide moderators with the name and version of any database software used.

The key to success in this unit is an effective table structure. Where candidates enforced referential integrity within their solutions they were able to ensure that the links were functional and some realised that this formed a key part of their testing process. Where referential integrity could not be enforced, this demonstrated a fundamental flaw in the structure.

Most candidates demonstrated a good understanding of validation, although sometimes the validation set was not consistent with the data provided and/or the scenario, demonstrating a lack of testing. Some candidates provided only one or two examples of validation, concentrating on showing that they knew how to set rules rather than using validation to minimise data entry errors in the scenario provided. Similarly, some candidates changed other field properties effectively for only a few fields.

Queries were generally carried out well by candidates and assessed well by centre staff, although the quality of reports did not always meet the requirements when higher marks had been awarded. For Mark Band 3 they should require little or no amendment to the layout in order to make them fit for purpose, which usually would include printing.

For candidates' interfaces to be considered *effective* there needs to be a data entry form for every table for which this is appropriate/needed. Although the assessment criteria for Mark Band 3 state that forms need to be created for *most* tables this is in recognition of the fact that some tables, for example lookup tables, do not require a data entry form, rather than allowing candidates to achieve full marks for a solution that is not fully usable. The Mark Band 3 requirement to provide access to 'forms, queries and reports' from the user interface can be considered met if candidates' interfaces provide direct access to all forms and all reports, so long as there is a form for every table and a report for every query – access to queries for day-to-day users is through the reports and access to tables is through the forms.

The weakest section of most portfolios was Learning Outcome 4, where candidates often did not document the testing they had carried out well, and did not explain the methods they had used. Some included evidence of other peoples' testing of their user interfaces, which is a valid part of their testing, but failed to include evidence of their own testing of someone else's user interface, which is what they need to be assessed on. If, when marking the portfolio, centre staff find that this is the case it should be possible to find the feedback that has been given by the candidate and ensure it is included in the portfolio.

## **R005**

Candidates completed this unit using a range of approaches, including websites and stand-alone products created using MS PowerPoint and Matchware Mediator. Both OCR assignments – 'Out and Up' and 'Wind and Waves' were used successfully by centres. Some centres had amended the assignment to provide an alternative scenario which they thought would be more appropriate for their candidates. Where these were of an equivalent complexity to the original assignment this was appropriate, but centres are requested to ensure a copy of any amended assignment is provided for the moderator.

Most centres provided electronic evidence of the final products, which is appropriate. However, some problems were encountered when these products had not been checked on a standalone computer to ensure all features, including sound, video and hyperlinks, worked. If it is found that a product does not work fully on a standalone system then some means of providing more complete evidence to the moderator needs to be found. Sometimes this can be achieved by exporting the final product in another format (eg PowerPoint exported to CD) and sometimes additional evidence can be provided by, for example, video, screen capture software and/or witness statements confirming the features that work when the product is viewed in the candidate's user area.

Candidates from some centres made use of online web-creation tools. Where these are used well they can allow candidates to design and create suitable solutions but when assessing the outcomes it is important that centres take into consideration the tools that candidates have used and the extent to which the outcome is a result of their own design ideas and efforts rather than provided by the tool being used. Whilst the type of product to be created and the software used

for the task must remain the independent choice of each candidate, centres should make sure that candidates understand that the use of pre-populated templates is not acceptable.

Many candidates produced very extensive products, beyond the expectations for this unit, perhaps limiting the amount of time they had to complete documentary evidence. Whilst for the highest marks in Learning Outcome 2 there needs to be sufficient pages to allow candidates to demonstrate their ability to create a clear and coherent navigation structure, making use of drop-down/sub-menus according to the type of product being created, candidates should be discouraged from creating many more pages than they need. However, the assignments do not specify the number of pages needed and it is not permissible for centres to do so – the structure of their product must be each candidate's own decision.

A significant number of centres awarded marks over-generously in Learning Outcome 1 where candidates' specifications were over-brief and general. To be considered 'sound' it would be expected that specifications will address all aspects of user requirements given in the assignment brief and that clear and measurable success criteria that are specific to the user requirements will be clearly identified. Some centres had provided candidates with amended scenarios which were insufficiently complex to allow any analysis and this disadvantaged candidates. Many candidates' success criteria resembled design ideas rather than criteria by which the final product could be assessed whilst others provided lists of criteria which were not inappropriate but were not specific and could equally well have applied to any other design brief. Such specifications were sometimes over-generously assessed by centres.

Candidates from some centres made very effective use of planning techniques such as spider diagrams and mood boards but some candidates appeared to have created one or more of these items in isolation, rather as part of their planning. Other candidates' planning was limited to a storyboard and in these cases centre marks were often over-generous. Site plans are a key element in the planning of an interactive multimedia product.

There was evidence that many candidates had been taught about areas of legislation such as photo permissions and privacy but, as in previous series, there were many centres where simple comments about basic copyright were over-generously assessed.

As in R002, candidates from many centres chose to list their components using a generic source table and this may have discouraged them from providing clear explanations and justification for their choice. In some cases centres over-generously assessed explanations that did not go beyond simple identification of the subject of each image or a statement of where it would be used.

Most candidates were able to produce a working interactive system with at least some choice of pathways. However, to fully meet the Mark Band 2 requirements of being a 'sound' navigation system it must be robust and allow a user to move easily between pages in whatever order is required. Where candidates have used MS PowerPoint and not removed the 'advance on click' option, a user could easily bypass any navigation system and click through and out of the presentation. Where candidates have produced applications which operate in full-screen mode with no obvious 'exit' these would cause an ordinary user problems. A website or other product with an inconsistent or inappropriately sized and/or labelled navigation bar would be considered to have poor usability. In none of these cases could the navigation system be considered fully 'sound'. Those candidates who had put more thought into their navigation systems, providing both internal and external links in a logical and structured way, considering where a user might want to go from each page as well as providing all other options were able to access the highest mark band.

Although most candidates' products were well organised many had limited multimedia components and the page layouts were often very simple. Where candidates had used MS PowerPoint they had fewer options for interactive features. Although extremely effective

interactive multimedia products can be created using this software this is only possible when its more advanced features are fully utilised. Some centres' marking in the second part of Learning Outcome 2 was over-generous in the absence of any interactive features other than the basic navigation system, which is assessed in the first part of this Learning Outcome.

Evidence of testing was not always clear. Whilst extensive screenshot evidence of testing is not required there must be clear evidence what the candidates have actually done. Vague claims such as 'test all hyperlinks' do not show what has been done. Some candidates added dates to show that some testing had been carried out as the product was being created, but these did not always match the type of test being carried out, which in some cases could only be done on a completed product. Where tests are only documented after the product is completed it is likely that most, if not all, of the genuine testing that takes place as components and features are added, and all error correction, has already been completed. Where candidates provided documentation to show what they had done at different stages of the creation of their product, including testing features as they were added and making amendments as necessary, however minor, this evidence was much clearer and acceptable.

To be considered 'thorough', tests must be clearly identified for all areas of the product, identifying specific areas of the product that need to be tested. Test tables that included only generic areas to be tested cannot be considered to demonstrate a high level of achievement.

The appropriateness of the feedback obtained is an important element of the assessment criteria for the final section of Learning Outcome 3. Factors to be considered include the questions to be asked and the people to be asked, including consideration of how many people to ask. Where candidates' initial success criteria were not clear, it was more difficult for them to achieve high marks here. Some candidates carried out their own evaluation against their success criteria rather than analysing the results of their feedback. This did not meet the assessment criteria.

## **R006**

Most candidates submitted work using the first OCR assignment 'The Camera Never Lies', although a second assignment 'Keep Pets' is also available. 'The Camera Never Lies' requires candidates to create a competition entry that promotes their local area. Although some candidates included both aspects of this scenario within their specifications many concentrated on only one, either the title of the competition or the local area promotion and so did not demonstrate a sound understanding of the client brief. Some centres had replaced the brief with their own scenario and in some cases this was not of equivalent complexity.

Consistent with R005 and R007, some candidates did not demonstrate a good understanding of what success criteria are, providing lists of design ideas rather than clear, measurable criteria that would allow them to assess the success of their work.

Candidates from some centres made good use of a range of research methods, including spider diagrams, interviews/questionnaires and 'competitor' research but in some cases marks were awarded over-generously where candidates had included examples of some or all of the above, without any coherent thread or evidence that this was part of the planning of their solution.

To be considered 'clear and detailed', candidates' design plans must be sufficient for a third party to implement with little or no additional instruction. Many candidates' designs were limited to a few written ideas rather than a design plan. It is expected that a clear design plan will lead logically to a search for appropriate components.

Comments in R005 above relating to lists of components, reasons for choice and legislation constraints also apply to this unit.

In some cases marks were awarded in this unit where no evidence could be found for setting image size and resolution and/or storage of digital files and/or the size, resolution, output medium and colour of the image to be presented to the client. Even when digital files were provided for moderation, often the working files were not included, so there was no evidence of the appropriate storage of both working files and final output.

In the first part of Learning Outcome 2, candidates are expected to set both image size and resolution if this is appropriate and possible within the software being used. The 'and/or' in the specification is intended to provide flexibility in the type of image and software chosen. For example, resolution would be irrelevant for a purely vector-based image. Where it is possible/appropriate (which is most likely when the scenario is based around photographs) it is expected that both will be set. The marking criteria assess candidates' reasons for their choices and many centres were over-generous in their marking where candidates had stated what they had done but not provided any reasons.

Some candidates provided good evidence of the use of a range of techniques to produce complex images but in some cases the final product was assessed over-generously when it did not communicate the intended message. The final image alone often does not effectively evidence all the techniques that have been used and candidates should be advised to ensure assessors and moderators can clearly see the range of tools and techniques that have been used.

Where candidates provided evidence of their folder structures these were often weaker than those seen in R002. Centres are recommended to ensure that candidates are taught the benefit of saving intermediary versions of their final product, in editable form, and of the use of folders to clearly separate source files, working files and final products.

The assignment asks candidates to present their image for the competition. It is important that they make their own decision about the method they wish to use and that their choice is made clear within their portfolio. In some cases where centres had made repository entries it appeared that candidates had limited themselves to electronic submission of their competition entries. Had they chosen other methods, this could have been evidenced using an electronic format by the centre.

## **R007**

Although this unit allows candidates to create solutions using audio, video or animation the majority of products presented for this unit were video clips. Most centres provided evidence of the final products electronically, which is the most effective method of demonstrating the quality and effectiveness of the products.

Evidence was submitted from both OCR Assignments – promoting the local area and the newer 'Shoulderpads' assignment, which is proving quite popular.

Many well-designed, creative solutions were seen this series but some products were relatively simple slide-shows of images or collections of clips with no real coherence or logical progression and these had often been over-generously assessed by centres.

The level of independence when defining the specification is assessed in Learning Outcome 1. Many centres provided no evidence for this. Where centres made a comment on the Unit Recording Sheet that clarified any support given, this was helpful and appropriate.

In order to assess the level of complexity, originality and creativity of the proposed solution within the first part of Learning Outcome 1 it is necessary to assess the candidates' design plans, e.g. timeline storyboards. These need to be detailed before the required aspects can be clearly assessed. Some candidates did not provide any documentary evidence of their designs.

Screenshots/printouts from completed or partially-completed products cannot be credited as designs.

Comments in R005 above relating to success criteria, lists of components, reasons for choice and legislation constraints also apply to this unit.

The final product alone may not effectively evidence all the techniques that have been used and candidates should be advised to ensure assessors and moderators can clearly see the range of tools and techniques that have been used.

In some cases it was not possible to find any evidence for the second part of Learning Outcome 2. Although many centres provided the final exported files for moderation, evidence of how the product had been saved in raw editable file format was not always provided. To demonstrate understanding of advantages and disadvantages of different file types some documentary evidence, either from the candidate or in the form of a detailed witness statement documenting verbal explanations, is needed.

Many candidates provided detailed test plans, showing both functionality and qualitative tests carried out, although some test plans were assessed over-generously where they did not clearly identify the tests to be carried out (i.e. how the item was to be tested) and/or expected outcomes.

To be credited, there must be some clear evidence of testing during completion, not simply a candidate statement saying that this had been done or a date implying this. In many cases tests that were claimed to have been carried out during completion would not have been appropriate or possible until the product was completed, e.g. testing the length of the final clip or qualitative assessments of the product. If candidates were encouraged to complete an implementation log, this would more easily and effectively demonstrate the genuine tests that are carried out as pages and features are completed/added.

**OCR (Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations)**  
1 Hills Road  
Cambridge  
CB1 2EU

**OCR Customer Contact Centre**

**Education and Learning**

Telephone: 01223 553998

Facsimile: 01223 552627

Email: [general.qualifications@ocr.org.uk](mailto:general.qualifications@ocr.org.uk)

[www.ocr.org.uk](http://www.ocr.org.uk)

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**OCR (Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations)**  
Head office  
Telephone: 01223 552552  
Facsimile: 01223 552553

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