

Cambridge Technicals

IT

Level 2 Cambridge Technical Certificate/Extended Certificate/Diploma IT -
05340, 05342, 05345

Level 3 Cambridge Technical Certificate/Introductory Diploma/Diploma/
Subsidiary Diploma/Extended Diploma IT - **05347, 05349, 05352, 05355,
05358**

OCR Report to Centres September 2016

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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Cambridge Technical IT Level 2 and 3 - 05340-05358

1. Overview:

The number of Centres delivering Levels 2 and 3 has increased again this year with the vast majority achieving very successful outcomes. There has also been an increase in the number of Centres paying for additional visits, in many cases asking for 2-3 additional visits. Centres are reminded that they need to contact their moderators as early as possible if they identify the possible need for additional visits as it is a very busy time of the year for all Centres and moderators may not be able to meet the timescales the Centres are hoping for.

New Centres and existing Centres with a partial or complete change of staff have often not accessed the training and support available to them, i.e. advisory visits, OCR Community and documents available on the OCR website. This has resulted in the visiting moderator having to provide considerable advice and guidance at the first moderation visit and the need to point out to Centre staff the documents they should be using.

The quality of the evidence presented by Centres continues to improve with a number of learners achieving first, second and third prizes in local and national competitions as well as securing places at university.

Many Centres have grown in confidence with the delivery of the qualification and have implemented a project approach to delivery by looking for opportunities to combine units, thereby using a more holistic approach to assessment.

Some Centres have taken a fresh look at their assignments this year and with three years' experience of delivering the qualification have produced some innovative and motivating assignments for Level 3 Units 1 and 2 which take a holistic approach to delivery. For example, starting the PDP and personal skills analysis for P7 along with P1, so that learners can appreciate how personal attributes might be valued by employers and which ones they might need to develop.

One of the main weaknesses at Level 3 has resulted from one piece of work being produced to meet two different assessment criteria where learners are required to produce two very different types of evidence for the command verbs, e.g. explain and evaluate. Frequently both pieces of work suffer when this is attempted.

More Centres are making use of software to check for plagiarism and some have found that not only were learners using text from the internet but also from learners' work completed for the qualification a year or more before. It is also important that Centres show learners how to reference their sources appropriately and that even when referenced, make it clear, they still need to show that they have the knowledge and understanding by describing, explaining and comparing, using their own words.

The accuracy of grades on Interchange both in terms of the assessors allocated to the candidates and the grades awarded is still a problem for some Centres. Centres seem reluctant to add new or temporary members of staff to Interchange and it is sometimes only when the moderator samples a portfolio that a different grade on the Unit Recording Sheet is revealed than that shown on Interchange. Some Centres appear to be entering target grades rather than actual grades on Interchange and need to be reminded of the Assessor's responsibilities (see Centre Handbook) and that the moderator's role is not to mark the work for the Centre, only to check that the Assessor's grading is accurate.

A good number of Centres have started using the new Guidance on Internal Standardisation booklet and this has improved the documentation of the internal standardisation process.

The OCR community has remained popular with Centres where they are able to ask questions and receive feedback and guidance from OCR as well as support from other Centres who have been willing to share ideas and resources.

2. General Comments

The Level 2 qualifications continue to be valued by Centres with some using them towards apprenticeship courses and others valuing the skills that can be taught and then developed further on the Level 3 courses. This provides a good level of knowledge, understanding and skills in the technical, graphics and website units which cannot be achieved so easily in the Level 3 qualifications alone.

A wide range of units were moderated by the team at Level 3, although the range for Level 2 was more limited. Creative units such as Units 12, 14 and 27 at Level 3 continue to be popular but Centres who have the equipment also offer some of the technical units, such as 3 and 4. Unit 43 is also proving popular with Centres. Although many Centres continue to deliver each unit in isolation, more Centres are looking to reduce candidates' workload by combining units that have common elements.

Most Centres select the units they will deliver based on the equipment and teaching skills available, along with the interests of their students but there are a few Centres who have given students the choice. Where this is the case, Centres struggle to provide the necessary support to students to successfully complete the chosen units.

Much of the evidence presented for moderation is still paper-based, although most Centres do provide electronic evidence of websites, animations, etc. However, an increasing number of Centres are providing most or all of the evidence electronically. Where this is the case, it is important that the evidence is suitably signposted, so that the moderator can locate the required evidence easily. This could be achieved by inserting hyperlinks within an electronic version of the unit recording sheet. Centres are reminded that when presenting evidence electronically, that the necessary equipment is provided in order to access it. While most moderators will take a laptop with them when making a moderation visit, there is no guarantee that they will have the required software to access the files if these are simply provided on a memory stick.

3. Comments on Individual Units

Level 3 Unit 1

Evidence is mostly appropriate. However, in LO1 there is often unnecessary coverage of health and safety and other legislation – a case of following the teaching content, rather than the assessment criteria. Evidence of D1 is often quite limited. In LO3 the range of communication methods used is sometimes limited and there is still a tendency to explain why different methods are used in general, rather than why they use a particular method for a particular purpose. In LO4, candidates need to ensure that they actually produce a personal development plan. Sometimes there is a lot of work seen on strengths, weaknesses, SMART targets, etc followed by diaries or blogs describing how their plan was followed but with little overt evidence of what they are planning to achieve and by when.

Level 3 Unit 2

This unit continues to cause problems for some Centres. This is particularly the case where candidates choose to use a large international company as the basis for their evidence, rather than something closer to home, such as their school or college. Greater emphasis needs to be given to the command verbs used, for example discuss (P2) compare (D1) and analyse (D2).

Level 2 – Unit 1 – Communicating in the IT industry

LO1 - There have been some problems with generic witness statements being used by some Centres as evidence for P1, P2 and P3. Centres are reminded that witness testimonies must be individual for each learner and contain sufficient detail to confirm how they met the assessment criteria being claimed. Some Centres encouraged learners to produce very good evidence of three different face to face activities where learners demonstrated their use of interpersonal skills for P1 and separate presentations where learners effectively communicated technical information to different audiences for P2 and P3.

LO2 – P4 has been evidenced with a good range of IT tools by most Centres. M1 has proved more challenging to Centres who have struggled at times to appreciate the type of evidence required for justify and have not always ensured that learners include all the tools evidenced in P4. D1 has generally been done well, although the type and depth of evidence required has sometimes failed to be appreciated by some Centres. P5 has been done well by most Centres with any problems resulting from the failure to provide evidence of the learner selecting and setting up the specialist communication channel.

LO3 – P6, quite often learners produce a poster (one of the suggested formats) for this and that can lead to the evidence not being of sufficient depth to show the learners knowledge and understanding to meet the command verb 'explain'. M2 is usually done well by those that attempt it.

Level 2 – Unit 2 – Working in the IT industry

The evidence for this unit has been to a higher standard than for Unit 1 and sources have been referenced as required. There has been a good variety of types of evidence with leaflets, posters, tables and job specifications. Learners have more easily met the correct type and depth of evidence for describe and explain on this unit. There has been some use of holistic evidence between D1 and P3 when learners are achieving the higher grades.

With the Level 2 units, moderators have noted that some Centres are not encouraging learners to provide an appropriate depth when required to explain. Learners have tended to provide descriptions as opposed to explanations where the purpose should also be included.

Level 3 – Unit 1 – Communication and Employability Skills for IT

The evidence for this unit continues to improve.

LO1 - There are some interesting assignments being used for LO1 that help to motivate learners and give them practical tasks like questionnaires for relatives on the personal attributes used in their work, an analysis of these that leads into a report on the personal attributes valued by employers. Some Centres have linked P7 skills analysis and VAK results to P1 so that learners can see what skills and attributes they need to develop for employment.

LO2 – One presentation or report for P2, P3 and D1 is now the most frequently seen format and this enables D1 to be achieved by a larger number of learners. Examples are not always related to business situations but nonetheless confirm the appropriate level of knowledge and understanding. P4 is still weak in some Centres and although evidence can frequently be cross

referenced to P6 and other Units, such as Unit 15 or 32, the learner write ups are not provided when this is done. Evidence has improved where action points have been raised and interviews, presentations, podcasts and videos are provided together with a learner write up of the interpersonal skills used for each of these.

LO3 – P5 evidence is good in all Centres. New Centres have sometimes failed to understand how M2 and D2 are extensions of P5 which leads to the learners explaining and justifying the one tool used for P6 in M2 and D2 rather than all those evidenced in P5. Learners would improve the evidence for M2 if they included more detail in relation to the features and functions of the different software they selected and why this has made that particular piece of software more favourable. P6 is usually completed to a high standard with the most frequent omission being the learner failing to identify their audience. Where action points have been raised for this, learners have provided additional reports confirming the audience and purpose for their work.

LO4 – P7 is usually achieved to a satisfactory standard, but P8 can lack dating evidence and any clear evidence of achievement of any of the targets other than the learner saying as much. Good examples are found, but quite frequently Centres fail to use the resources available to them on the scheme website or provide evidence from review meetings. If learners are encouraged to produce a PDP with SMART targets and action points of how they will work towards these targets, then the reviews are much easier to address. M3 has been done well by some Centres with a skills gap approach to their ideal job or the steps needed to get to university. Weaker evidence is produced in some Centres where learners tag an improvements section to the end of their PDP and provide no steps as to how these will be achieved or what their aim is.

Level 3 – Unit 2 – Information systems

Overall the evidence for this Unit has improved. Grading is more appropriate with more learners being entered as a Pass.

LO1 P1 - Centres that use an applied approach and have a scenario for learners to use seem to have produced more relevant evidence than those that adopt a theoretical approach. For P2, Centres do not always fully appreciate what is required. When discussing the characteristics of good information, they could use examples from their evidence for P1 and include the consequences of using data that does not meet these characteristics. M1 is usually done well when related to a business scenario that needs improving. It has sometimes been linked to Unit 23 and Unit 19 and the validation and checking of input or the collection of data. Some issues have arisen where learners have identified improvements but they are not improvements to the business information systems.

LO2 – This has improved over time with a number of Centres using a case study approach although it can be difficult to confirm how well the learner has understood the issues. The most frequent problem for P3 is that Centres are encouraging learners to look at the legal, ethical and operational issues as separate items when they could be evidenced more effectively if considered more holistically. An example would be a learner explaining about the Data Protection Act and including the ethical issues that this also has an impact on as well as the operational issues that have to be implemented in order to comply with it. This provides a more holistic approach and supports the evidence for the comparison for D1.

LO3 – Some Centres have really got to grips with how this LO fits together and moves from the generic to the specific and how two simple single processes can be used for M2. Centres have responded well to feedback/advice and guidance/action points and the work produced for this LO has improved a great deal this year. The weaknesses still relate to DFDs with some Centres still accepting flow charts which are not the same as DFDs.

LO4 – The major fault with this LO still seems to be the business decision making process behind the selection and presentation of data. Centres that link this LO to a business decision in their Unit 19 or 23 scenarios and provide charts, graphs and tables in a presentation enable their learners to provide much better evidence. Learners should be selecting data based on the characteristics of that data and therefore the data that they have to work with should be more than they require so that they can go through the selection process.

General Comments on Optional Units

More Centres have attempted a project approach to delivery this year which has proved to be quite successful. This has been carried out with the games units in particular but some Centres have also combined the animation, graphics and website units into one project. Centres are reminded that when following the project approach, it is important that the evidence is assessed against the individual assessment criteria of the individual units to ensure that the requirements have been sufficiently met.

Where learners are required to produce annotated design documentation, it is important that Centres ensure that it is sufficiently detailed to enable a third party to create the website, game etc. as intended. Many Centres have taken on the idea of encouraging learners to give their documentation to another member of the group to see if they have any questions concerning the design. They present the questions to the learner who then improves the level of detail on the design documentation.

When a unit requires learners to complete a test plan, it is important that learners start completing the test plan as they are developing the product. It should not be completed at the end as this results in learners stating that 'all is ok' when in fact during construction of the product, they invariably identified a number of issues which they had to rectify. Centres are also reminded that the purpose of the test plan is to test the functionality of the product i.e. does it do what it is supposed to do based on the requirements of the business and intended user? Checking for spelling errors should not be included as part of a test plan, as it is not a test, but something that should always be carried out.

4. Sector Update

During the last academic year, Centres have attended OCR Expos and half day INSET events for the Level 3 Cambridge Technicals in IT (2016). Information relating to the 2016 specifications can be found at <http://www.ocr.org.uk/qualifications/cambridge-Technicalss-it-level-3-certificate-extended-certificate-introductory-diploma-foundation-diploma-diploma-05838-05842-2016-suite/>. Centres are advised to frequent check on the website as there are resources being uploaded on a regular basis. There are

delivery guides for the units as well as model assignments being uploaded for some of the key units.

The redeveloped qualification offers specialist pathways in IT Infrastructure Technician, Emerging Digital Technology Practitioner, Application Developer and Data Analyst. The units have been developed to reflect the skills, knowledge and understanding that today's universities and employers demand. OCR will also be offering a 1080GLH qualification which will provide learners with an excellent opportunity to develop their skills, knowledge and understanding to prepare them for working in the industry and/or going on to university.

The OCR assignment checker service is available to Centres where they can have their assignments reviewed for a small fee. In addition, Centres will still have access to the OCR community where they can ask their questions about the new specification.

Further INSET events are available as well as some online training events. Centres are advised to access the information from the CPD Events page on the OCR website.

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