

Cambridge Technicals

Business

Level 3 Cambridge Technical Business Certificate/Extended
Certificate/Foundation Diploma/Diploma/Extended Diploma - **05834-05837,**
05878 (2016 suite)

OCR Report to Centres: 2016 – 2017

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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.

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

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OCR REPORT TO CENTRES

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Cambridge Technical Business Level 3 05834-05837, 05878 (2016 suite)

1. Overview

This report covers the delivery, assessment and moderation of the centre-assessed units. Separate reports are published for the examined units in January and June and these are available from the qualification webpage on the OCR website.

The number of centres offering this new qualification is good and centres have reported that they find the units both engaging and vocationally-relevant.

Centres are reminded of the two main documents that comprise the Cambridge Technicals in Business:

- The Centre Handbook which is the main reference point for course leaders and tutors (there is one version for the Certificate qualifications and one for the Diploma qualifications)
- The Admin Guide which is the main reference point for administering entries and maintaining quality assurance structures across the centre – previously a pdf document, this is now a set of webpages on the Exam Officer section of the OCR website.

The Centre Handbook may be updated from time to time. At the time of writing the most recent version is dated August 2016. Centres should check on the OCR website that they are using the most up-to-date version. Key changes between versions are summarised at the start of the Handbook.

In addition, a guide to the Command Verbs has been published by OCR. It is strongly recommended that both tutors and learners familiarise themselves with the contents of this document. This document is to be used in relation to the internally assessed units only.

Each unit specification contains a guidance on assessment section – it is important to note carefully the statements in this section, especially any requirements including ‘must’ as such instructions are mandatory.

Most units have Model Assignments. These are available to download from the qualification webpages. The purpose of these assignments is to provide a scenario and set of tasks that are typical of how industry practitioners might encounter the topics covered in the unit. The tasks enable tutors to assess learners against the requirements specified in the grading criteria. Each scenario and its tasks are intended to give a work-relevant reason for applying the skills, knowledge and understanding needed to achieve the unit. Detailed guidance on how to use each assignment, including how to adapt them, is given in the opening pages of each assignment.

Most centres have used the OCR Model Assignments and have used them appropriately. In a few instances centres have made modifications that could potentially result in excessive guidance being given to learners. Centres are reminded that the tasks in the assignment must not instruct learners in detail how to complete a task or to provide specific evidence. Learners who do not possess the understanding required to complete the tasks can be deemed ‘not ready’ to complete the assignment and may be given additional time to learn the issues covered by the unit’s teaching content.

A number of centres have made use of the support services provided by OCR. These include subject expert visits (usually telephone calls) for new centres and an assignment checking service for new and existing centres (available via the CPD Hub).

It is a concern that some centres with registered candidates did not access the moderator visits last year and presumably are intending to wait until they have delivered all the internally assessed units before requesting a moderation visit. Centres are encouraged to access the two 'paid for' moderation visits per year. Whilst the moderator is not permitted to look at partially completed units, they can provide feedback on the completed units allowing learners to address any weaknesses or even improve their grades at a later date. Moderators can also provide guidance on the units that the centre is intending to offer.

Centre assessors are also reminded that they are required to complete a unit recording sheet for every unit for every individual learner and provide comments as to why they are accepting the evidence, ie feedback. The majority of assessors are using the forms correctly and providing some excellent feedback to their learners.

Centres are reminded to refer to Section 8 of the Centre Handbook which lays out the mandatory requirements for internal standardisation. A good number of Centres are using the Guidance on Internal Standardisation booklet which contains detailed guidance as well as sample documentation.

The vast majority of centres are conducting internal standardisation and this has resulted in successful moderation taking place.

All centre claims are made on OCR Interchange and this system is then used by the Visiting Moderator to submit details of the sample required at moderation and then to process the moderation outcomes. It is important that centres ensure that any claims entered onto OCR Interchange are accurate. To help ensure this centres are reminded to:

1. Ensure that each assessor is declared on Interchange and then matched to each candidate when building the claim. Moderation cannot take place as planned if the relevant centre assessors for each candidate cannot be identified on the claim.
2. Check that the claim is free from error before submitting it. All claims can be saved, edited and re-saved before finally submitting it to the moderator, at which point it cannot be edited and may have to be withdrawn in case of errors.
3. Check the Centre Handbook and Administration Guide for full details of the processes and deadlines involved with submitting claims for moderation and for the visits themselves.

There have been a number of issues this year where learners have been missed off the claim (and only noted after the moderation has taken place) and/or the incorrect grade uploaded. A moderator cannot withdraw individual learners and in some instances this has resulted in entire claims being withdrawn and having to be re-entered. In some instances, it has also had an effect on the sampling strategy of the moderator who may have only been informed on the day of the visit that there were errors in the claims.

Claims must also be submitted at least two weeks prior to the moderation visit. There have been instances this year where moderators have spent a lot of time chasing centres to upload their claims.

Centres are further reminded that for each learner submitting units for moderation, an authentication form should be completed and signed. It is not a requirement to provide a centre authentication form, just the individual ones for the learners.

More Centres are making use of software to check for plagiarism. 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.

Centres are reminded that it is an OCR requirement that all candidate work has an OCR Unit Recording Sheet (URS) on the front. This sheet includes spaces to record whether the portfolio was used as part of an internal standardisation exercise. In addition to the URS all portfolios should have a Candidate Authentication Statement completed by the candidate. Centre authentication of the work submitted for moderation is given on Interchange before submitting the claim.

Overall, the administration and documentation from centres has been very good and moderators have been able to access the evidence with very little trouble. It is important that the evidence is well referenced and made fully available for the moderator. A moderator does not have the time to look through evidence in the hope that they may find what they are looking for. If the presentation of the evidence is too difficult to navigate, a moderator could stop the visit and arrange to come back at a later date.

2. General Comments

Centres have used a variety of resources to support their learners. A number of centres have adapted existing learner support materials or made use of materials designed for small and new business start-ups. An approach that has worked particularly well has been the use of local employers as case studies, often involving a mixture of visits to the business and/or hosting visiting speakers. Such local organisations are usually an ideal resource for learners when carrying out research for their assessment evidence.

Centres have understandably delivered whole units, typically one at a time. Most centres have delivered Unit 4 first then other mandatory units for their particular qualification. The most common units moderated in 2016-2017 were Units 4, 5 and 11.

Centres have used a variety of methods of evidencing learners' achievement of the assessment criteria. However most portfolios have consisted of a mixture of written reports and witness testimonies.

A good range of organisations have been used to support assignments. In general small to medium-sized employers (SMEs) operating on a single site in the local area offer better contexts than large multinational or multi-branch organisations. Supermarket chains or franchise-based restaurants are often a poor choice because candidates seem to struggle with identifying exactly what the business is; for example with some fast-food organisations is the business I am studying the foreign-owned holding company, the wholly-owned UK-subsiidiary or the franchised outlet in the town centre? The benefit with local SMEs is that it is usually possible to walk through and around the business in under twenty minutes and see several different functional areas operating. Such businesses make it far easier for a Level 3 learner to get a concrete understanding of the whole business and how the various parts (literally and figuratively) fit together.

Most centres have recognised the importance of separating learning and assessment however a number of issues have arisen which may be explained by these two aspects being confused.

Candidate evidence has usually been well structured and organised although there has been a tendency from some centres to include evidence which is either irrelevant or does not fully address the relevant assessment criterion.

Very occasionally candidates have provided evidence in their portfolios which has been generated from tasks contained in OCR learner support materials or other similar resources. OCR has published a number of such materials – such as Delivery Guides and Lesson Elements but as is stated in the Delivery Guide for each unit: “The activities suggested in this Delivery Guide MUST NOT be used for assessment purposes.”

In general centres have understood that candidates are expected to apply their understanding of the teaching content, developed through a teaching/learning phase, to generate their assessment evidence. In a few instances it was clear that learners had not been taught the teaching content before undertaking assignment work and this limited the extent to which evidence produced met the required standard. Tutors should emphasise to learners that when completing assignments it is in the learner’s interest to apply all relevant teaching content to meet the requirements of the particular task and its business context.

Also on rare occasions the extent of guidance and support given to learners during assessment work has been too great. As a rule learners should be taught all that they need to be taught in order to take them to the point where the tutor is confident that they are ready to complete an assessment task; but the task itself should not provide support that would mean that the candidate has been unable to demonstrate that they alone are able to use their understanding to meet the assessment criterion.

Where centres have used Witness Statements the quality and level of detail has been variable. Witness Statements must provide a full description of what the witness observed the learner do. This should be in sufficient detail to enable a third-party (eg the assessor, internal moderator or visiting moderator) to read the statement and be able to form a judgement as to whether or not the observed activities did or did not demonstrate competence. In general, where an assessment criterion is likely to be evidenced through an activity such as a talk or discussion then the teaching content will contain a list of relevant competencies and these should be the focus of the descriptions in the witness statement. It is unlikely that a Witness Statement on its own will contain sufficient detail to enable such activities to be fully evidenced and centres should consider alternative forms of evidence such as audio/video recordings.

Learners have generally tried successfully to provide original and authentic evidence. Malpractice in the form of plagiarism or collusion (whether intentional or unintentional) is much less likely to occur when:

1. Learners produce their evidence on their own and not, for example, as part of a group. As a general principle, group work is not recommended when undertaking any assessment activity unless specifically required.
2. Learners demonstrate their understanding of sources quoted, for example by paraphrasing or showing how the quote can help to illustrate the point being made.
3. Learners do not include classroom-based learning materials, which are likely to have been produced under close guidance from the tutor and are therefore likely to be very similar to materials produced by other learners.

Centres are encouraged to make use of the Guide to Command Verbs document and use it with their learners to develop their understanding of the requirements of each assessment criterion. In addition the following comments about particular command words should be noted:

If a criterion asks learners to analyse the implications of an issue (e.g. Unit 4 M1: Analyse the benefits to a specific business and to its customers of maintaining and developing customer service) then learners should seek to develop chains of argument linking cause (improved customer service) with effect (e.g. the impact on customer satisfaction, retention, spending, business costs, revenues and profitability).

If a criterion asks learners to recommend and justify actions (e.g. Unit 4 D1 Recommend and justify changes to the customer service provided by a specific business in order to improve the customer experience) then learners should aim to ensure that their justification makes a sound case for how and why the recommendation will have a positive impact – the expectation is that learners will not only discuss benefits that result from the changes but also make a ‘business case’ i.e. demonstrate how the performance of the business will improve.

Most centres have shown a secure grasp of the required standards and have made accurate assessment decisions. Where not, it has often been because of a misreading of the assessment criteria or a failure to provide valid evidence or a misunderstanding over the requirements of the command verbs. Most of these issues have been addressed in the evidence section above.

Centres are entitled to two paid-for moderation visits each year. Most centres have taken advantage of this, whether they are delivering a one-year or a two-year learning programme. All centres are encouraged to make full use of their entitlement as any unused visits in one academic year cannot be carried over into the next.

Centres are required to have in place suitable systems to ensure that all evidence in the centre is assessed to the same standard. Such systems are required regardless of the number of assessors in the centre however a centre which only has one assessor is not expected to use the same internal standardisation methods as a centre with several assessors.

Where there was only one assessor it was usually the case that a colleague (typically with relevant vocational-assessment experience if not relevant subject experience) sampled the portfolios. In most centres where there was more than one assessors then it was usual practice for one assessor to take the lead in standardising assessment however it was not always clear from the documentation provided how the various assessors were brought into agreement in the event of any disagreements between them.

3. Comments on Individual Units

The following comments relate to the most commonly moderated units. Centres with questions concerning other units are advised to ask them via the OCR Customer Contact Centre.

Unit 4

This mandatory unit was moderated at most visits undertaken. Most centres followed the OCR Model Assignment with many centres changing the scenario to an appropriate local business. Centres should note that the Model Assignment was updated in February 2017 as changes were made to the assessment guidance for P6 and P8 – centres should ensure that they are using the most up to date version of the assignment.

P3: This requires learners to ‘Explain the range of customer services a specific business provides...’. Instead, some learners explained the services offered by the selected business that happened to be operating in the service sector. In the context of the Golf Club this means that instead of describing the services offered in the Club Shop, learners should be explaining how the Club Shop provides customer service (e.g. by assisting players with physical impairments). A useful approach would be to take the types of customer listed in the teaching content for Learning Outcome (LO)1 and explain how the needs of each of these types of customer are met by the business.

P4: Evidence should address the form, style as well as layout of communications. Some evidence seen covered only layout.

M2: Some evidence seen described the social media activity of the chosen business. The evidence requirement is to focus on how the business manages its corporate profiles. Learners could cover issues such as: does the organisation have a social-media usage policy? Who in the business can post messages onto its social media sites? What happens if an employee violates the social media usage policy?

P10: Some evidence seen relied too heavily on internet sources, stating the legal requirements rather than describing the constraints faced by the specific business itself. Learners should be encouraged to include specific examples in their evidence of scenarios where the actions of the business are limited by relevant legislation (e.g. in the context of the golf club, what limitations are placed on what it can do with personal data given to it by members?)

Unit 5

This unit has been done well by centres that have chosen a suitable business context for the assignment. In general, the business chosen must be undertaking meaningful marketing activities – in practice this means a for-profit activity that involves selling a product to customers. Any organisation that does not have a product which it offers for sale to a market and needs to achieve a profit/surplus on its sales is unlikely to offer sufficient scope for learners to demonstrate their understanding of the marketing concepts in this unit.

For P6 learners are required to provide evidence that they have conducted both primary and secondary research. This evidence can include completed questionnaires, focus group notes or internet research notes. There is no requirement to include a Witness Statement as part of the evidence.

Unit 11

The Model Assignment for Unit 11 was updated in July 2017 – some of the data in Appendix 1 was modified. Centres should check that they are using the most up to date version.

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