

CAMBRIDGE TECHNICALS LEVEL 3 (2016)

Moderators' report

BUSINESS



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Introduction

Our Moderators' reports are produced to offer constructive feedback on centres' assessment of moderated work, based on what has been observed by our moderation team. These reports include a general commentary of accuracy of internal assessment judgements; identify good practice in relation to evidence collation and presentation and comments on the quality of centre assessment decisions against individual Learning Outcomes. This report also highlights areas where requirements have been misinterpreted and provides guidance to centre assessors on requirements for accessing higher mark bands. Where appropriate, the report will also signpost to other sources of information that centre assessors will find helpful.

Notes to Centres

There were a number of centres who had selected an invalid combination of units or had claimed the wrong units for a candidate that prevented overall qualifications results being issued. Please note that it is the responsibility of the centre to check that correct units have been entered for certification claims. OCR cannot guarantee that the issuing of results in these circumstances will meet deadlines for UCAS confirmation.

Two key changes have occurred in relation to the Level 3 Technicals qualifications, both in relation to the examined units; firstly, an additional re-sit has been allowed, so candidates can have two further attempts at an examined unit if they wish to improve their result from the first attempt made. And secondly, a 'near pass' R grade has been introduced, which enables candidates who do not pass but achieve sufficient marks to gain some points for their examined unit outcome, which may mean that it is not necessary to re-sit the exam.

General overview/Introduction

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.

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. This is a set of webpages on the Exams Officer section of the OCR website.

In addition, a guide to the Command Verbs has been published by OCR. It is strongly recommended that both tutors and candidates familiarise themselves with the contents of this document.

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 will require tutors to assess candidates against the requirements specified in the grading criteria. The 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 candidates. Centres are reminded that the tasks in the assignment must not instruct candidates how to complete a task or provide evidence. Candidates who do not possess the understanding required to complete the assignment tasks can be deemed 'not ready' to complete the assignment and may be given extra time to learn the issues covered by the unit's teaching content.

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. While the moderator is not permitted to look at partially completed units, they can provide feedback on the completed units allowing candidates 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 candidate and provide comments as to why they are accepting the evidence, i.e. feedback. The majority of assessors are using the forms correctly and providing some excellent feedback to their candidates.

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 – this is available in the Administration section of the subject webpage.

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 make sure that any claims entered onto OCR Interchange are accurate. To help ensure this centres are reminded to:

1. Make sure 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.

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

Many centres are making use of software to check for plagiarism. It is also important that centres show candidates 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 on 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.

Comments on Individual units:

Unit 4

For this unit most centres have used the OCR Model Assignment. Many centres have successfully adapted the context to a local business, for example a hotel or leisure centre and have visited the organisation to help their candidates gather information about the business. Many centres have a good understanding of the requirements of this unit, but some potential areas of difficulty for assessors and candidates include:

For P3 some candidates explain services offered by the business (e.g. membership services or golf equipment supplied) rather than customer services (e.g. how the organisation adapts its standard provision to meet the specific requirements of individual customers).

For D1, candidate's justifications of why the customer service improvements should be implemented are often strongest where the rationale lies in spotting some customer needs (described in P1) that are not being met by the organisation as described and explained in P2 and P3).

For P4 some centres have provided candidates with examples of business communications that include examples of good and poor examples of form, content and layout. This is good practice and has enabled candidates to more effectively assess each document.

For P5 some candidates have struggled to understand the difference between corporate standards and the corporate profile. One way to understand this difference is that corporate standards are the means by which the organisation attempts to make sure that the messages it transmits reflect a single corporate image. The resulting 'view' of the company that the customer receives from these communications is the resulting corporate profile. Hence M2 can be understood as the means by which the business attempts to control what customers think about the business by the way it manages its media (e.g. social media) activity.

For P6 and P8 most centres are now choosing to respond to the Guidance on Assessment by providing video recordings of candidates. Some centres are continuing to rely on witness statements only and while this is acceptable it does require the statements to contain very detailed descriptions of what the candidate did and said. It is important that assessors use this evidence to assess candidates and not, for example, their opinion at the time of seeing the original performance. Documents that only record a summary of the assessor's judgement are not a witness statement because they do not describe what the witness observed. Moderators can only moderate using the same evidence base as was available to the centre's assessor hence either video/audio or a detailed witness statement is needed.

For D2 candidates do not need to create an amended communication, they do however need to justify any changes that should be made to one to make it suitable for a different audience.

Unit 5

Most centres have a good understanding of the requirements of this unit however some issues arise particularly with Learning Outcomes 3 and 4. This is often because a key premise of these two Learning Outcomes is that candidates need to conduct market research in order to 'test' an existing marketing proposal. Some centres have adapted the OCR Model Assignment, or used their own, and in so doing have required candidates to conduct the research in order to identify a marketing proposal – this approach makes it difficult if not impossible to achieve P5 and P7. Candidates need to be given an existing marketing proposal (e.g. a business wishes to introduce a new version of an existing product or wishes to change an existing product's packaging) and then conduct research designed to judge whether or not the proposal should be implemented.

In order to achieve P7 candidates must assess the extent to which the market research findings they obtain are valid (i.e. candidates should judge the extent to which their research has given them sufficient evidence in order to make a recommendation as to whether the proposal should be implemented). Candidates should consider the extent to which their questions and their sampling strategy have achieved this. Some evidence seen is weak because it focuses more on the validity of the research methods used rather than the findings obtained. Other evidence is weak because the assessment of validity is more of an attempt to justify the usefulness of the research method and the results obtained.

An example might help to illustrate the requirements of P7: If a candidate claims that a key finding of their research is that “65% of your customers say they would use the new product” then this can only be a valid finding if:

- a. an unbiased sample of the business' customers was used
- b. the customers were actually asked a question that enabled this conclusion to be drawn (in this example customers were actually asked if they would **consider** using the product – hence the finding is not valid because it conflates ‘consider using’ and ‘will use’).

Findings that are valid can then form the basis of the recommendations in D2, any that are of limited validity can inform the improvements in research that are made in M3.

Unit 8

For Unit 8 it is important that assessors have a good understanding of the differences between P3 and D1. For P3 each method of training and development used by the business must be assessed separately. For example candidates should assess whether on-the-job training is an effective method, if used by the business. For D1 candidates must judge whether the overall training and development offered by the business is effective. For example candidates should consider whether the needs of the business are being met by its overall approach to training and development.

For P5 many candidates are providing detailed descriptions of each motivation theory they have learned, followed by a short descriptive statement of how the method is used by the business. Instead, the criterion invites candidates to discuss the actual methods used to motivate employees (e.g. financial and non-financial rewards, professional and personal development opportunities, management styles, etc.) and then how these methods might be explained using relevant motivation theories. There is no requirement for candidates to apply every theory they have learned, only those that can be used to help explain the methods the business uses.

Unit 11

Most centres have a good understanding of this unit. Most centres have used the OCR Model Assignment although it should be noted that this assignment was amended in July 2007 and this is the version that centres should use. Some issues have arisen during moderation. These include:

For P2 the evidence must relate to three named stakeholders in a specific organisation and how the requirements of these stakeholders influence the accounting records kept.

For P4 candidates must prepare (i.e. complete) at least two of the source documents listed in the teaching content under 3.1. In order to do this they must be supplied with relevant financial; information, the Model Assignment task 2 and Appendix A provide an example of a suitable task.

For D1 candidates must assess one of the four concepts/policies listed in the teaching content (matching, prudence, consistency, and materiality). For example they could assess the extent to which an organisation consistently applies depreciation methods across different assets over time and the extent to which any inconsistencies affect the validity of the accounting records.

For M2 candidates must accurately compare cash discounts (a reduction in the amount to be paid by a creditor in return for prompt payment of an invoice) and trade discounts (an offer to sell a product for less than the list price) in terms of how they are treated in both the day-books and the ledger accounts.

For D2 candidates must evaluate the use of cash and trade discounts in more than one business organisation. For example they could compare how two organisations offer cash discounts for prompt payment of invoices and judge the extent to which the beneficial impact on cash-flow outweighs the negative impact on total income received.

Unit 16

The Model Assignment asks candidates in Task 2 to 'include evidence of how you initiated and produced your plan'. This is to make sure that candidates fully evidence P4 and P5.

P4 requires candidates to 'produce a project plan' so the requirement is for them to show that the plan was produced (i.e. P4 is not assessing the plan in terms of quality but the act of producing one – the plan needs to be fit for purpose and include the required aspects but otherwise there is no qualitative judgement needed about the plan for P4, the requirement is to show evidence that it was produced).

For P5 the requirement is that the choice of tools used is justified. So the evidence needs to specifically address this point. This could be a commentary on the plan i.e. a separate document.

What form the evidence of initiating (i.e. planning) and producing the plan takes does not matter – so long as it is robust. It could be a reflective diary, task log, annotated versions, or a Witness Testimony from a suitable observer that describes what the candidate did to initiate and produce the plan.

Unit 19

For Learning Outcome 3, P3 is about describing the opportunities and challenges that a specific business has actually faced when first operating in a new, international market. Candidates should discuss a business that has recently started operating in a new export market.

P4 is about identifying the potential challenges a business could face if moving into a European market compared to moving into a non-European market. As outlined in the Assessment Guidance candidates "need to outline the new market which they are considering their selected business could expand into. They need to look at a business planning to move into a European market, but compare this to moving into a non-European market, and hence the benefits/challenges of each scenario. As the evidence produced by candidates needs to be applied to a specific business, there should be reference to both the business and the chosen new market throughout." Candidates could, for example, consider a firm wishing to expand into an Asian or African market compared with starting to export to France or Germany.

Unit 22

For P4 candidates must be provided with an overall budget for the project.

Learning Outcome 2 requires candidates to collaborate in order to be able to deliver a project. This has resulted in some uncertainty as to what evidence should be presented by each individual candidate. As a general rule each candidate must produce individual and original evidence, either of their own planning or of their own contribution to a group process (the latter could be video or witness testimony evidence showing the individual candidate's contribution to a group discussion). Examples of the requirements for each candidate are as follows:

For P6 each candidate must individually produce a plan for the project as a whole.

For P7 each candidate must individually produce a proposal for what each group member will do in order to help the project plan to be fulfilled. This could be a written document produced by the individual candidate. The group then meet and agree who does what. The evidence for this could be a video of the meeting or a witness statement describing in detail what each individual candidate did and said.

For P8 each candidate must then produce a plan outlining how they will achieve their part of the plan.

The Unit guidance for P8 states: For LO2 P8, candidates must have their own individual plan which **shows their own responsibilities, progress against the plan and any changes they have agreed.** Candidates will, however, need to collaborate with others to make sure they know **how their role will interact with other team members and the overall plan.**

Most common causes of centres not passing

Where grades submitted have not been agreed this is usually for one of the following reasons:

1. The command verb requirements have not been met. For example instead of analysing the impact on a business of a particular action, the candidate describes the actions the business might take in response to it.
2. Not meeting the wider requirements of an assessment criterion. For example not applying the teaching content to a specified business, or only describing legal constraints when ethical constraints are also required.
3. Not addressing the requirements of the Guidance on Assessment section of the unit specification.
4. Applying teaching content in an incorrect way. For example, an incorrect explanation of a relevant motivation theory.

Avoiding potential malpractice

Some centres are making use of software to check for plagiarism. It is also important that centres show candidates 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.

Helpful resources

Centres are advised to make use of the following resources:

- OCR Cambridge Technicals Delivery Guides
- OCR Guide to Command Verbs
- OCR Learning resources (please note that these are not designed for summative assessment purposes as they give support for learning and so would give too much guidance for candidates to independently show what they know and can do).

The internet is a good source of materials that can support teaching and learning.

Additional comments

Centres have used a variety of resources to support their candidates. A number of centres have adapted existing candidate 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 candidates 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 2017-2018 were Units 4, 5 and 8.

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

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-subsiary 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 candidate 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 candidate 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 candidates had not been taught the teaching content before undertaking assignment work and this limited the extent to which evidence produced met the required standard. Centres must not guide candidates on how to complete the assignment tasks. Instead, tutors should emphasise to candidates that when completing assignments the candidate should aim to identify and then apply only the teaching content relevant to meeting the requirements of the particular task and its business context. The extent to which candidates have chosen relevant content and their ability to apply it accurately are key considerations for the assessor when deciding whether or not an assessment criterion has been met.

On rare occasions the extent of guidance and support given to candidates during assessment work has been too great. As a rule candidates 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 candidate do. This should be in sufficient detail to enable a third-party (e.g. 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 help such activities to be fully evidenced and centres should consider alternative forms of evidence such as audio/video recordings.

Candidates 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. Candidates 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. Candidates demonstrate their understanding of sources quoted, for example by paraphrasing or showing how the quote can help to illustrate the point being made.
3. Candidates 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 candidates.

Centres are encouraged to make use of the Guide to Command Verbs document and use it with their candidates 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 candidates 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 candidates 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 candidates to recommend and justify actions (e.g. Unit 1 D1 Recommend and justify changes to the customer service provided by a specific business in order to improve the customer experience) then candidates 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 candidates 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 make sure 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 assessor 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.

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