
Guide for Teachers: Unit 9 Working to a Brief (G048)

GUIDANCE ON THE EVIDENCE REQUIRED

Clarification of portfolio requirements

This unit is externally assessed by a portfolio of evidence completed in response to tasks set by OCR. These tasks will differ year on year and will only be valid for the academic year in which they are issued. Centres therefore need to ensure that candidates complete solutions to briefs for the current year only. In order both to support other units within the qualification and to introduce an element of variety, these tasks will cover a range of different scenarios year on year. Some of these scenarios will be immediately recognisable to candidates, whilst others will require some further research. The nature and depth of this research will be based on an interpretation of the chosen scenario. Further clarification of how this issue applies to the tasks will be given below.

Centres should be aware that each brief will focus on the needs of a client. In some cases, candidates may be able to work with a third party. However, if this is not possible, staff in Centres will need to take on this role. Where this is the case, candidates will still need to complete the initial research into current working practices. In this case, staff will need to provide support for candidates so that they are not disadvantaged. However, as with those candidates who are able to find a third party to play the client, candidates need to appreciate that research should not be restricted to this one area.

The portfolio for this unit assesses the candidate's ability to plan, prepare, deliver and reflect on the production of a solution. The portfolio does not, other than minimally in task d, assess the final solution. As such, the quality of the final solution may be considered an irrelevance, when compared to the process undergone to achieve it. A candidate who produces an excellent solution may not be able to reflect well on the process and may score less well than a candidate who produces a solution which is not of such a high standard, but who has been able to show good planning and the ability to reflect on the experience.

Finally, Centres should be aware that work for Unit 9 may be completed in conjunction with work for any of the other A2 single award units. Where this is the case, Teachers will need to ensure that the evidence requirements for both units are met.

Task a: A preparatory report into current working practice.

Candidates will be given a selection of briefs. You may specify the brief that candidates should attempt or candidates may be given a free choice. Whichever brief is chosen, candidates must be able to evaluate the current working practices of the target organisation and, as a result of that evaluation, suggest issues which the project will address. Where the chosen brief allows it, the target organisation may be an educational establishment. Research into this area should be straightforward. However, candidates need to be aware that where the chosen brief refers to a non-educational scenario, there is still a need to carry out specific research as necessary.

Where a scenario asks candidates to produce a solution to a new problem, the preparatory report should focus on current working practice in an equivalent area. An example would be a scenario asking candidates to produce images for a new magazine. Candidates would not be able to reflect on current working practice, as there currently is none. Rather, they should concentrate on the general process of producing images for inclusion in magazines of a similar nature. Such a discussion would clearly enable candidates to be aware of the specialist requirements of the specific task, which would include such issues as how many images are generally used on a page, whether they were in colour and of what size.

This task should be presented in a report format that pulls together many different research strands, including but not limited to, interviews, observations and questionnaires.

If well written, the report should make it clear how the organisation currently carries out the specific task or combination of tasks, which is being replaced by the project. It should be clear from the research that has been conducted, what issues need to be specifically addressed in the final project.

Task b: A project plan in response to the set brief.

Any successful solution to a complex problem requires planning. Candidates will need to show clear evidence of how they intend to meet the requirements of the chosen brief. An element of mind mapping and the consideration of more than one response would be constructive and would allow the candidate to show at least some of the initial stages of planning a response.

Once the general nature of the solution has been decided upon, the candidate will need to show that they can set and meet short, medium and long term deadlines. How the candidate chooses to do this is their own decision, but the use of diagrammatical representation, such as critical path analysis and Gantt charts, would be appropriate.

Task c: A diary or log of work completed.

This is a simple task to do, but one which will need thought if it is to be successful. Candidates must complete a diary or log which concentrates on four main areas. These areas are highlighted in section 9.2.5 of the syllabus and also in the Mark Band descriptors for task c, but are fundamentally:

- How the candidate's ICT skills have been extended by following the task
- How the candidate's understanding of techniques to manage and develop ICT systems alongside other units in the specification has developed
- How the quality and contribution of the candidate's own work has affected others and vice versa
- How the candidate has dealt with issues as they have arisen. These issues may include but would not be limited to:
 - (i) Software issues
 - (ii) Hardware issues
 - (iii) Working in teams
 - (iv) Dealing with different personalities.

Whilst it is entirely possible that an ill ordered stream of consciousness completed every day could cover the main points in an adequate manner, it is more likely that a log divided into separate sections, one for each area of concern with perhaps another for more general comments, will provide more of a focus for the candidate.

Task d: Support materials for use with the project.

As part of the solution, candidates should produce support materials. The nature of these support materials will depend on the brief being followed and may be help sheets, advice notes for team mates, research materials such as data collection forms or support materials of a different nature. However, these materials must be of a high quality and the candidate must be able to show, through the production of these materials, that their range of ICT skills has improved from those acquired during the AS course. This may be evidenced as a short report at the end of an appendix or as a separate element within the diary.

Tasks e, f and g all require the candidate to reflect on specific areas once the solution has been completed. The differences between each specific area of reflection are subtle and candidates need to be clear of the specific focus for each task.

Tasks e and f are both part of the process of Continual Evaluation and may be evidenced within the diary. Task g is part of the Summative Evaluation and will not occur within the diary. However, it is unlikely that, where tasks e and f are evidenced solely within the diary, candidates will score beyond Mark Band 1. Candidates will be assessed on the quality of their written communication as part of task g.

Task e: An evaluation of your success in planning the project.

Candidates should comment on the quality of the initial planning. This will focus on how effective the planning was and will also comment on how an improvement would be made in any future planning so as to be more effective in the future. At the higher end, this reflection will be in depth and will fully discuss strengths and weaknesses of all aspects of the plan.

Task f: An evaluation of your success in implementing the project.

Candidates will comment on how well they implemented the solution. Fundamentally, this will include at least some discussion of software skills. However, other issues, such as a discussion of the candidate's ability to interpret other's requirements or a perceived problem in working as part of a team or keeping to deadlines would all be relevant.

Task g: An evaluation of your ICT solution to the given brief.

Candidates will comment on the quality of the solution itself, rather than the part they played in its inception and creation. The report will consider the strengths and weaknesses. In order to access the upper mark band, candidates must include reflection based on feedback from the user. In some cases, the end user will need to be a responsible adult playing the role, but candidates who are able to recruit specialists to provide such feedback will be more likely to receive in depth feedback, allowing for more perceptive analysis of the quality of the solution.