

# Principal Examiner Feedback

June 2011

Functional Skills ICT Level 2 (FST02)

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## **FST02 – Functional Skills ICT Level 2**

### **Introduction**

This was the fourth series for this specification. There were over 22,000 candidates sitting the examination during the week beginning 13 June 2011. There are significant differences between the current specification and the Functional Skills Pilot specification. Reports from examiners indicate that there continue to be some Centres where it seems that some candidates have been poorly prepared for the examination.

It is a requirement of this examination that candidates should have access to the internet only during the first 15 minutes of the examination. There continues to be evidence that the relevant staff in Centres are seemingly unaware of this stipulation and that facilities for offline email are not made available to candidates for the purpose of this examination. There are some centres where the use of students' personal email accounts (e.g. Hotmail, Yahoo mail etc) is evident. It was also noted that there are some centres where the candidates were copying themselves into the email produced. This is a serious breach of the examination code of practice. Centres need to ensure that candidates are reminded that there could be serious consequences if they are found to be breaching the code. The guidelines for setting up the user accounts for the examination are clearly laid out in the Information for the Conduct of the Examination issued for each series.

### **Task 1: Internet research**

Candidates were asked to find the name and price of a main course meal in an Italian restaurant in Leeds and to obtain 3 images of Italian food and acknowledge the source of the images.

Candidates generally succeeded in using a search engine to find the information in Task 1a. They were asked to take a screenshot of the search engine, clearly showing the search criteria. Many candidates seem unaware of what constitutes the search engine and failed to show the full page and often search criteria were not evidenced clearly. Many showed the page from an Italian restaurant menu rather than the search engine. Most candidates scored marks for naming and pricing a main course though some lost the mark for failing to be specific enough with answers such as pizza or pasta.

In part b, they were asked to obtain images of three Italian dishes for use in a later task. They were also asked to copy the website address into a table. Many candidates gained full marks for this task. Those that failed to gain full marks often truncated the website address – usually as part of a long Google images address. Candidates need to be reminded that for acknowledgment of sources, it is the copyright owner that should be acknowledged. "Google images" is not sufficient. On this occasion, the embedded website address within Google images identification was accepted.

Areas for improvement and development:

- understanding the term "search engine"
- understanding the term "search criteria"
- producing screenshots which show the required information in a readable manner
- copying website addresses accurately and completely.

## Task 2: Spreadsheet

There were 5 sub-tasks for the Spreadsheet activity. Candidates were presented with a spreadsheet of different dishes from Italian, Chinese and Indian cuisines and were required to format the spreadsheet to make it clearer. They were then asked to sort the spreadsheet into alphabetical order of dish (column A), produce two simple formulae, filter the records to find just the Italian main course dishes and then produce a graph to show the relative proportions of profit raised by these dishes.

Most candidates were able to access the spreadsheet but the quality of the formatting was very variable. Many candidates failed to format currency values appropriately and often left the spreadsheet with truncated data. The application of borders and shading was another area of weakness for many candidates. For the majority of spreadsheets, horizontal shading is more appropriate than vertical shading. Adding borders around blank cells was frequently seen.

The majority of candidates managed the sorting of column A, but failed to extend the sort to the rest of the table. This left a spreadsheet where the data was mixed up and Chicken Tikka Masala became a Chinese dessert rather than an Indian main course dish.

Most candidates correctly calculated the values for the profit margin and the total profit and scored some marks for doing so – however sometimes they failed to provide a printout which showed the formulae used. Some candidates lost a mark for using inefficient formulae. This was usually the inappropriate use of the SUM function within a simple arithmetic formula, eg =SUM(F2-D2) or =SUM(E2\*G2)

The filtering was completed successfully by a large percentage of candidates but some lost marks for not using the filter tools and using deletion as a way of removing unwanted data. Many candidates also failed to filter on both columns necessary for complete success. Candidates lost marks if the printout did not provide sufficient evidence of filtering – for example using deletion and/or sorting.

Finally candidates were asked to provide a pie chart of the total profit of the four Italian main course dishes. Most candidates produced the correct type of graph but had not produced an appropriate title. Candidates should be encouraged to use the wording in the instructions to assist in creating a meaningful title for the graph. Many candidates failed to check that their printout was fit for purpose and therefore lost a mark for not displaying the data so that the different segments were distinguishable. Some candidates also lost a mark for having unnecessary information displayed on the graph e.g. a legend and category data labels.

Areas for improvement and development:

- formatting a spreadsheet
  - currency
  - decimal places
  - appropriate borders and shading
  - word wrapping
  - appropriate row heights and column widths
  - use of text formatting to enhance visual clarity e.g. bold, italics, font size
- using formulae
  - simple formulae using arithmetic symbols (+, -, / and \*)
  - using functions e.g. SUM where appropriate
  - using efficient formulae

- sorting
  - on one column
  - expanding selection to include full table
  - on more than one column
- filtering
  - simple filters using a single criterion
  - simple filters using more than one criteria
  - filters involving more complex criteria
- graphs
  - pie charts, line graphs and column or bar charts
  - suitable titles
  - appropriate legend
  - axes labels where relevant
  - adding percentages and/or data values to a chart.

### **Task 3: Menu**

Candidates were asked to prepare a menu for the new branch of the Italian restaurant chain. They were to use the information obtained from their internet research, the dish which was calculated to be the most profitable from the spreadsheet task and information from the data files provided. Some candidates felt that spreadsheet software or presentation software was the most appropriate tool for the task.

Most candidates managed to include the necessary items and gained good marks for doing so. However where they failed to gain marks, this was often due to poor selection of information e.g. choosing Indian or Chinese dishes from the data files and poor layout so that the menu was not fit for purpose. Failure to copy words like dessert and Zanipolo correctly caused some candidates to lose marks.

Most candidates fail to use the software facilities appropriately. This is often evidenced in failure to use tabulation or alignment effectively to improve layout. Candidates also often place overreliance on WordArt which is rarely appropriate in more formal business documents.

Areas for improvement and development:

- selection of appropriate software for producing desktop publishing and/or word processing documents.
- integration of information from a variety of sources including text, images, tables and graphs
- use of formatting techniques such as:
  - tabulation
  - text wrapping
  - text enhancements – bold, italic, underline, font sizes
  - use of tables and/or columns
  - appropriate selection of font styles
- consideration of fitness for purpose.

#### **Task 4: Preparing an email**

Candidates were asked to prepare an email which could be sent to the manager of the new restaurant. They were to attach a copy of the menu to the email.

Examiners report that there are still several centres where there is evidence that candidates are accessing the internet during this task and using online accounts - often these are the candidates' personal accounts. This is unacceptable and a breach of the code of practice for this examination. Candidates who access online accounts may face disqualification for these breaches. There are ways of producing the evidence using offline account systems – for example the setting up of Outlook or Outlook Express accounts as part of the examination account used by the candidate. Further guidance is also available on the Frequently Asked Questions section of the Edexcel Functional Skills website.

Other candidates often failed to get marks because they did not provide evidence of using email software. These candidates produced word documents and therefore could not provide evidence of attaching the menu. They were still able to gain the two marks available for a suitable subject and a suitable message.

Areas for improvement and development:

- selection of appropriate software for producing email
- careful copying of text from question paper especially email address
- attachment of file to email
- using a suitable subject line for an email
- using appropriate language for email messages.

#### **Task 5: Using ICT**

In task 5 candidates were asked about the legal constraints surrounding the use of images obtained from the internet. They were also asked to create a folder with a meaningful name and move the work they had produced into the new folder.

Most candidates gave a partial response to the question about copyright. Many mentioned the concept of copyright but did not go on to explain that the owner of the image needed to give permission for the use of the images. Some candidates discussed issues relating to the food and health matters rather than discussion of copyright.

Most candidates were able to produce a new folder but many were unable to provide a suitable or meaningful name. Evidence of files moved into the new folder was also occasionally poor with unreadable screenshots. Candidates need to take more care in checking the printout of their work to make sure that the critical information is readable.

Areas for improvement and development:

- understanding of copyright and its impact on the production of documents for public use
- ability to provide meaningful file and folder names for documents
- ability to move files into new folders
- ability to provide readable evidence of work
- checking of printout to make sure that content is fit for purpose.

## Pass mark for FST02

Maximum mark	50
Pass mark	32
UMS	6

**Note:** Grade boundaries vary from year to year and from subject to subject, depending on the demands of the questions.

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