

# Principal Examiners' Report March 2011

**FS**

## Functional Skills ICT Level 1 (FST01)

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# FST01 - Functional Skills ICT Level 1

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## Introduction

This was the third series of examinations for this specification. The paper was written to closely match the layout and the degree of difficulty of the previous series. There were approximately 12,700 entries for the qualification, more than twice as many as sat the examination in January. It was felt that some candidates were not sufficiently prepared for the assessment.

It was a requirement that candidates had no further access to the internet or internet technologies after the first 15 minutes. However, there were several centres where this was not adhered to, since there were instances where candidates had used images from the internet for later tasks and where candidates had used online email account facilities, in some cases candidates were using their personal email accounts (often Hotmail or Gmail). Particularly worrying were examples where scripts indicated that candidates had emailed copies of their work to their own personal email account. This could result in a serious breach of the examination window's integrity and centres must ensure that candidates are fully aware of the serious consequences that could result.

Centres are strongly advised to read the Instructions for the Conduct of the Examination (ICE) document, which can be downloaded from [www.edexcel.com/fsict](http://www.edexcel.com/fsict). This document should be read by the Examinations Officer, the ICT faculty staff and the network technicians, since it contains a wealth of guidance and information to enable them to deliver this examination successfully.

Many candidates did not appear to understand the instructions for collating their work. The printouts were incorrectly hole punched, some pages were upside down and often not in task number order. Candidates are prompted at the beginning and throughout the examination to enter their name, candidate number and centre details before printing, yet many scripts showed handwritten details added after printing. This practice should be discouraged and candidates prepared properly for the examination so that they know how to add the relevant details in the header or footer of a document as required.

There were five tasks to be completed by candidates; the background to which was the Midsummer Madness music festival.

### **Task 1**

In this task the candidates were asked to search the internet to locate a copyright free image of Fistril Beach in Newquay and to save as an image file. The majority of the candidates obtained an appropriate beach image and opened the correct file ResponsesMarL1 entering the required URL; however many images/websites were not copyright free and in a number of cases, candidates did not enter a full URL. Also, a significant majority of candidates failed to save the image with a meaningful name (seen through Task 5 evidence).

A significant majority of candidates scored at least 2 marks for this task. Marks were lost as a result of not evidencing copyright free website address in the ResponsesMarL1 document and by not saving the image as a file with a meaningful name.

Areas for improvement and development:

- understanding the impact of copyright on the use of web based resources
- finding copyright free images
- saving images to file with meaningful names.

### **Task 2**

In Task 2, candidates were presented with a spreadsheet which contained figures showing the fees, managers and artists for Midsummer Madness.. They were asked to add a new record for the band 'Last Prophets' stating the manager 'Lewis Randle and fee of 25000. They were also asked to format the 'fee' column to 2 decimal places, widen the columns to show all data, to add a suitable title and to apply formatting features to ensure that the data was clear and easy to understand.

Candidates were then required to calculate the total fees for all bands and to produce a chart to compare the fee for each band. Most candidates entered the new record but many made minor errors such as lack of capitalisation and did not enter the data correctly. Very few candidates added a title or formatted the fee column as currency, and in a significant majority of cases, formatting features were either not applied, or did not improve the clarity/ease-of-use of the data.

Although many candidates did calculate the correct 'Total fees' they failed to print showing formulas and as a result did not gain all available marks.

Most candidates attempted to produce the expected bar/column chart from the required data range; however, some candidates included the fee and/or manager in the chart and a common error was leaving a legend which is not appropriate .The majority of candidates scored well in this question. Where they lost marks it was usually as a result of not displaying formulas for the spreadsheet, making sure that the information was clear and easy to read and not labelling that the chart clearly.

Areas for improvement and development:

- adding sensible titles to spreadsheets
- adding effective formatting enhancements to improve the overall readability of the data such as:
  - gridlines/borders
  - shading key information such as totals
  - emboldening column headings
- printing data from a spreadsheet
- printing the formula view of the spreadsheet
- selecting the correct data range for graphs
- selecting appropriate graph types
- adding titles and axes labels to graphs
- removing unnecessary legends from graphs.

### **Task 3**

In Task 3, candidates were asked to produce a poster to advertise the Midsummer Madness festival. They were given a text file containing both relevant and non-relevant text and an image bank which contained both appropriate and inappropriate images. The candidates were asked to include relevant text from the provided file, one suitable image from the image bank and their own beach image from Task 1. Candidates were required to ensure that the poster was clear and suitable for the target audience and finally to demonstrate their ability to make the poster read only.

Many candidates did not appear to understand that the text chosen for the poster should not give conflicting details; for example, the inclusion of both 'free entry' and 'cost £25' or the mention of 'icy road conditions....' for a summer music festival. The majority of the candidates inserted 2 suitable images onto the poster but many did not consider the location or sizing of their images and many candidates lost marks through including distorted or pixelated images in their posters. Several candidates lost marks as result of not using a body font size appropriate for a poster, which meant that information was not clear and easy to read. Although many candidates did apply a range of formatting features in the majority of cases marks were lost because the formatting was not effective and not used to good effect.

Overall, there was little evidence that candidates had checked their work for accuracy and meaning, and the majority of the candidates failed to demonstrate the ability to make the file read only.

Areas for improvement and development:

- selecting appropriate text from a given data file
- making good use of white space and achieving a balanced layout
- maintaining image proportions and sizes
- using font size appropriate to the document's purpose
- ensuring that the important information is highlighted
- planning a suitable layout of text and images
- checking for accuracy
- accessing security features to make file read only.

#### **Task 4**

In task 4, candidates were asked to prepare an email to be sent to the festival organiser with the spreadsheet attached.

Most candidates were able to access email software, prepare a suitable email and add the correct attachment; however, subject lines and messages were not always appropriate for a business setting with many candidates using inappropriate greetings to the festival organiser and a subject line that lacked sufficient detail e.g. spreadsheet.

It was disturbing that centres had not adhered to the instructions in the Instructions for the Conduct of Examinations (ICE) document and many candidates obviously had access to the internet during this task since they were using online web based email accounts. This is a breach of the examination's integrity and must not be repeated in future series. It is imperative that in future series candidates should be set up with a dedicated examination email account which can be accessed offline – for example "Outlook Express".

The majority of candidates scored well in this question. Where they lost marks it was due to no subject lines and inappropriate or missing message text.

Areas for improvement and development:

- accessing email software and accounts offline
- using appropriate greetings and subject lines in an email
- writing appropriate messages in an email
- attaching files to an email.

#### **Task 5**

In task 5 candidates were asked to produce a screen shot to show where their files were stored and the filenames used. The majority of candidates were able to do this successfully; however, some did not save their files using meaningful file names.

A cause for concern was that some candidates were using their home directories which included files and folders created outside the examination window. For future examination series, centres must ensure that dedicated user accounts are setup for use during the examination.

Areas for improvement and development:

- choosing meaningful filenames
- producing a screen shot of an appropriate size in which the text is legible.

Pass mark for FST01

Maximum mark	<b>50</b>
Pass mark	<b>30</b>
UMS	<b>6</b>

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

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