

Principal Examiners' Report March 2011

FS

Functional Skills ICT Level 2 (FST02)

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FST02 - Functional Skills ICT Level 2

Introduction

Designed to closely match the layout and degree of difficulty of the previous series, March was the third series for this specification. There were approximately 15,000 entries at Level 2, almost twice as many as were entered in January.

Use of the internet for completion of Section A was well evidenced. However, there remain a number of centres where access to the internet was available to candidates after the initial 15 minutes allowed. Use of the internet other than for the initial 15 minutes is in breach of the examination rules and may result in candidate scripts not being marked at future series.

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. This document should be read by the Examinations Officer, ICT faculty staff and network technicians as it contains a wealth of guidance and information to enable them to deliver this examination successfully.

Candidates still have problems understanding the instructions for collating their work. many scripts were submitted with holes incorrectly punched, printouts upside down and not in task order. Centre based supervision and/or preparation may well alleviate such issues and facilitate the marking process.

There were five tasks to be completed by candidates based on a fictitious charitable organisation *Healthy Heart* that promotes healthy lifestyles.

Task 1

In this task candidates were required to find the UK Government's recommended daily calorie intake for adult males and adult females. Candidates were asked to save the information and list the details of websites used in the ResponsesMarL2 document.

The task was well attempted with the vast majority gaining 4 or more marks.

Most candidates were able to identify sensible values for the daily calorific intake for adult males and females, however only a minority identified the correct figures as recommended by the UK Government.

The majority were able to show evidence of selecting a suitable URL, but only a minority produced evidence of an official URL such as '.gov' or '.nhs'.

The marks lost were due to the omission of 'UK Government' in the search criteria and/or lack of discrimination in selecting from the sites returned by the search.

Areas for improvement and development:

- reading the task and instructions carefully
- selecting the website information specifically in relation to the task.

Task 2

The candidates were provided with a spreadsheet which showed a list of activities and the number of calories burned by each during a 30 minute session. In the first part of the task they were asked to calculate the calories burned per minute for each activity and to format the data so that it is clear and easy to understand.

Using the data calculated candidates were then asked to 'use the functions of the spreadsheet' to automatically enter a rating for each activity dependent on whether it burned 10 or more calories per minute.

Candidates were then asked to calculate the number of calories burned in a 45 minute session and using this data identify the maximum number of calories burned when doing three 45 minute sessions in different activities.

The final part of the task was to produce a suitable chart showing the calories burned for each activity in 45 minutes.

The vast majority of candidates made an attempt in at least one part of the task.

The majority were able to calculate the number of calories burned per minute, however many failed to produce a formula view of their spreadsheet and as a consequence could not be awarded a mark for replication. A small number also failed to format the calculated data.

The second part of the task proved to be problematic to many. A large number of candidates ignore the instruction to 'use the functions of the spreadsheet' and merely entered the rating manually. However those that made an attempt to use the software generally gained two of the available three marks, the last mark being missed by using >10 rather than ≥ 10 in the formula. In addition it was disappointing to see candidates losing marks by truncation of the formula on the printouts.

Many candidates failed to attempt the calculation of calories burned in 45 minutes and subsequently they incorrectly calculated the total for the top three activities. The majority gained marks for entering the value in the correct cell, although a significant number failed to make any enhancements to their spreadsheets.

The majority of candidates attempted to create a chart and most gained at least one mark for either an appropriate chart or correct data. There were many instances of candidates selecting more than the required data. In general candidates attempted to enter a meaningful title but unfortunately omitted a reference to time and subsequently could not gain the mark. Axes labels were usually sensible and spelling was accurate for both titles and labels. Many candidates failed to remove the legend.

Areas for improvement and development:

- printing in formula view
- using the functions of the software
- formatting data
- selecting only necessary data
- adding appropriate titles to charts

Task 3

In this task candidates were asked to create a leaflet for the *Health Heart* campaign to promote a healthy diet and the benefits of exercise.

Candidates were provided with 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, data collected from Task 1, image(s) from those provided and information from the spreadsheet in Task 2.

Only a very small minority failed to complete the task, however a significant number produced posters rather than leaflets and the overall quality of the work varied widely.

Whilst the majority were able to select suitable text and images some made no attempt at selection and included all of the text provided and inappropriate images. The information found in Task 1 was generally included, but information from the spreadsheet was often omitted.

The majority of candidates were able to structure the leaflet into sections with suitably sized headings and subheadings however these were not always consistently positioned.

The majority of candidates had given thought to the positioning of images in relation to text, however some images were distorted and in many instances the logo was of a poor quality having been resized inappropriately.

Candidates had generally used formatting techniques to good effect; the most frequently used being bold, underline and bullets. However candidates were often inconsistent with capitalisation when using bulleted lists.

Suitable software had been used by most candidates and there was evidence of using interface & system's facilities.

The majority of candidates had produced a leaflet that was fit for purpose i.e. aimed at an adult audience but many lost marks by lack of planning not checking or evaluating the leaflets. The main problems arose from minor errors such as missing full stops, inconsistencies such as capitalisation, and poor hyphenation and little sense of balance or use of white space.

Areas for improvement and development:

- including all of the information stipulated in the task
- ensuring consistency throughout
- planning the final product
- checking the accuracy of final product
- evaluating the use of ICT tools and facilities

Task 4

The task set for candidates was to complete a pre-prepared letter. The majority made a good attempt and many were able to score more than half marks, although a minority clearly had no idea of the layout or content of a formal letter.

Weaker candidates did not understand that the letter needed a subject and jumped straight into the letter content, however others successfully put in a subject line which included both 'leaflet' and 'healthy eating'.

The more able candidates were able to gain the remaining marks, often in a few short sentences, using a suitable tone to explain that the leaflet was enclosed. The brevity of their responses also helped candidates to achieve the final mark for spelling, punctuation and grammar.

Areas for improvement and development:

- understanding the layout and content of a formal letter
- checking work for accuracy in spelling, punctuation and grammar.

Task 5

This task was broken into two parts, in the first part candidates were asked to describe one way of using the internet to work collaboratively and the second part required an explanation of how the risk of computer viruses can be minimised.

Despite being included in the Sample Assessment Material it was clear that few candidates understood how they could use the internet to work collaboratively. Many cited email, but made no reference to file sharing and subsequently could not gain either of the available marks.

Candidates were more successful with the second part of the task. The two marks available were for either giving one method and an expansion or two methods of minimising viruses. However, many gained only one mark for using a virus checker with no expansion such as regularly updating or additional method such as the risks associated with email attachments.

Areas for improvement and development:

- understanding methods of using the internet to work collaboratively
- understanding methods used to minimise the risk of viruses

Pass mark for FST02

Maximum mark	50
Pass mark	30
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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