

Principal Examiner Feedback

February 2012

Functional Skills ICT

Level 1 (FST01)

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Introduction

This was the seventh series of examinations for this specification. The paper was written to closely match the layout and the degree of difficulty of the previous series. As with previous series, 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 as there were instances where candidates had used images from the internet for later tasks. 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, 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.

Centres should make sure that candidates' work is collated correctly before it is submitted to the examiner as many candidates did not hole punch the printouts correctly, some pages were upside down or back to front and they were frequently not in task number order. Also candidates' work should not be inserted into plastic pockets.

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 Windscreen Repair Company.

Task 1

In Task 1 candidates were asked to search the internet for the name and website address of a windscreen repair company. Whilst the majority of candidates were able to identify the required information there was a frequent lack of understanding of the requirement to produce a screen shot to show the search engine. Many of the candidates produced a screen shot of the repair company website instead. The large majority of candidates scored at least three marks for this task. Where they lost marks it was usually due to poor search engine evidence. Candidates should be encouraged to use the text given in the question to help in their search. They should also be encouraged to ensure that their screenshot evidence is clearly readable. Many examiners noted that often candidates had produced the correct screenshot, but some of the marks were not gained because it was not possible to read the text they had typed in. Candidates need to be reminded that the Google website is a search engine and is therefore not appropriate when requested to enter the website address of the source of the information required in the test.

Areas for improvement and development:

- understanding the need for a screen shot of search criteria
- producing screen shots in which the critical information is easy to read
- copying website addresses accurately and completely

Task 2

In task 2, candidates were presented with a spread sheet which contained figures for different sites for the fictitious company. They were asked to enter data for an additional site and format the spread sheet to make it clearer and easier to understand. They were also asked to calculate the profit from each site, sort the spread sheet in decreasing order of profit and to produce a chart to compare the profit from each site.

Most candidates entered data correctly into the spread sheet and made a reasonable attempt at entering a formula to calculate the profit. Many candidates correctly multiplied the number of customers by the repair charge but failed to subtract the site rent. Many candidates did not display the formulae for the spread sheet. More candidates formatted the spread sheet appropriately compared to previous series, but many candidates did not do any formatting except the widening of columns. However, there is still a significant number of candidates who do not check that the printout has been produced without truncation. Sorting was generally carried out well by those who produced the necessary evidence.

Most candidates produced the expected bar/column chart from the required data range. However, titles and axes labels were not well done and would seem to need more practice. The candidates should be encouraged to use the wording of the question to guide them to add a suitable title and suitable axis labels.

Areas for improvement and development:

- checking data entry for accuracy
- adding appropriate borders and shading
- using font enhancements to improve layout of spread sheets
- appropriate use of the =SUM function
- removing truncation from a spreadsheet
- replication
- sorting data in a spreadsheet
- selecting appropriate graph types
- selecting data for graphs
- adding titles and axis labels to graphs
- removing unnecessary legends from graphs
- printing data from a spreadsheet
- printing the formulae view of a spread sheet
- printing a graph using appropriate size and proportions, on a separate sheet

Task 3

This task required candidates to produce an A5 flyer for 'Chip Fixit'. They were then asked to password protect the document.

The mark for A5 was often missed by using an incorrect template, or using landscape and not portrait orientation.

Several candidates missed the point that this was a flyer for Chip Fixit and not the windscreen repairer they had found in Task 1. Consequently many missed Chip Fixit as a title. "Chipped Windscreen" was rarely formatted as a sub-title.

There were only a few candidates who did not delete the section of given text that related to the weather, but a significant number omitted other parts of the text and so the flyer did not read as intended. Some candidates continue to invent their own text when this is often unnecessary.

Most candidates inserted the correct logo and positioned it in a suitable location, but many did not reduce its size so that it was appropriate for the flyer. Inserting a suitable image did not cause many difficulties for candidates. Those who lost marks for this generally inserted too many images or distorted the image when resizing.

In spite of feedback in all previous reports and guidance within the mark scheme regarding the use of Word Art, candidates continue to use this feature for their titles, thus losing marks. Candidates should be taught that WordArt is rarely appropriate in business documents.

The web address was generally copied over, although the contact details for Chip Fixit were not enhanced. Candidates need to check that they have met all the criteria for such documents using the question to guide them. For example, many candidates omitted vital components from their flyer such as the contact details of the company.

Many candidates failed to gain any marks for password protection of the file. They either did not know how to access the file security or overlooked this task. Those who did access the file security often failed to show evidence of a password having been typed into the relevant dialog box.

Areas for improvement and development:

- selecting appropriate software for producing a flyer
- using page setup to ensure correct size and orientation
- selecting appropriate text from a text file
- selecting appropriate images from an image bank
- maintaining image proportions
- using appropriate image sizes
- using appropriate font sizes and styles
- considering suitable layout of text and images
- checking a document for fitness for purpose
- accessing security features to make files password protected or read only

Task 4

The majority of candidates successfully demonstrated use of email software and scored the first four marks for this task. Where candidates did not score was in the use of only requesting 100 (rather than 1000) copies of the flyer or in the use of a non-business like tone and poor spelling in their message.

Areas for improvement and development:

- selecting appropriate software for producing an email
- copying email addresses accurately
- adding suitable subject lines
- attaching relevant documents to an email
- using a suitable business tone in the message

Task 5

Most candidates scored well on this task. However, a few candidates left the file name as Doc1.doc or Publication1.pub. Many candidates had apparently done the task but the contents of the screenshot were not clear and so credit could not be given. Some of the folders seen indicated that centres were allowing candidates to access all their normal user areas. Centres are reminded that the candidates should be given no access to their normal desktop and directories during the test, but should be given specific exam accounts that are enabled only for the direction of that particular test session.

Areas for improvement and development:

- creating meaningful new folders
- moving files into folders
- producing screenshots which are readable

Pass mark for FST01

Maximum mark	50
Pass mark	33
UMS mark	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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