

Examiners' Report

November 2013

Pearson Edexcel Functional Skills
ICT Level 1 (FST01)

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Introduction

This paper was written to closely match the layout and the degree of difficulty of the previous series. It was clear that some centres had worked hard to prepare their candidates for the exam, improved spreadsheet skills, including the ability to sort and to format a spreadsheet plus producing a functional chart, allowed these candidates to gain high marks for Question 2. But as in previous series, there are still centres that entered candidates who lacked the knowledge to access the higher marks.

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 the Edexcel website. 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 ensure 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 or attached to the cover sheet.

There were five tasks to be completed by candidates; the background to which was an energy saving charity.

Task 1

In Task 1 candidates were asked to search the internet for the opening hours and telephone number of the Energy Saving Trust. This task was generally well done and most candidates gained either three or four marks although a small number failed to copy a full or relevant web address, this was generally when candidates included the Google URL. Candidates need to be reminded that Google 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.

The majority of candidates were able to identify the required information, however there was occasionally a lack of understanding of the requirement to produce a screen shot to show the search engine. Some candidates produced a screen shot of the Energy Saving Trust website instead. Candidates should be encouraged to ensure that their screenshot evidence is clearly readable. Some 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.

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 spreadsheet which contained data to enable calculations about the weekly cost of electricity in the home. Candidates were asked to correct data for one item and then calculate the weekly cost for each appliance. They were then asked to sort the spreadsheet in descending order of weekly cost and format the spreadsheet to make it clearer and easier to understand. Finally they were asked to produce a chart to display the weekly cost for each appliance.

Almost all candidates entered the correct data into the spreadsheet. Most candidates used a workable formula to calculate the total cost per visit and replicated it correctly. A significant number used addition instead of multiplication to calculate the weekly cost. It is common for candidates to include 'Sum' in a formula when it is not necessary. A minority of candidates lost marks because they failed to produce a formula printout. Most candidates sorted the weekly cost in descending order but not all included all the columns when sorting.

More candidates formatted the spreadsheet appropriately compared to previous series. They were asked to format currency to £ and two decimal places and many candidates did this successfully, however some applied this formatting to the non currency column. There are still some candidates who do not apply any formatting and do not check that the printout has been produced without truncation.

Most candidates produced the bar chart from the required data range. A small number of candidates produced a pie chart. However, titles and axes labels were not well done, candidates should be encouraged to use the wording of the question to guide them to add a suitable title and axis labels.

Areas for improvement and development:

- checking data entry for accuracy
- checking that data is formatted appropriately
- adding appropriate borders and shading
- using font enhancements to improve layout of spreadsheets
- appropriate use of the =SUM function
- replication
- sorting data in a spreadsheet (both ascending and descending order)
- ensuring that when sorting data, each row is kept correctly aligned
- printing the formulae view of a spreadsheet
- selecting data for graphs
- adding appropriate titles and axis labels to graphs
- checking spelling and capitalisation of titles and labels
- removing unnecessary legend from graphs
- printing a chart using appropriate size and proportions, on a separate sheet

Task 3

This task required candidates to produce a letter for *Enwatch2013*. They were provided with the text of the letter and asked to include suitable images from the data files, the chart from Task 2 and some of the information from Task 1

There is still a general lack of understanding about the purpose of different types of document and how these meet the needs of a task and are made fit for purpose. Some candidates did not format the document as a letter and produced documents which were more like posters.

Many candidates did not delete the labels for some of the items such as 'Address' and 'Greeting'. Despite feedback in previous reports and guidance within the mark scheme regarding the use of WordArt, candidates continue to use this feature for their titles. Candidates should be taught that WordArt is rarely appropriate in business documents.

Most candidates inserted the logo and positioned it in a suitable location and inserting a suitable image did not cause any difficulty for the majority of candidates. Those who lost marks for this generally inserted too many images or distorted the images when resizing.

The chart, opening times and phone number were generally inserted in the correct place although some candidates failed to delete the prompt text correctly. Candidates need to check that they have met all the criteria for the document using the question paper to guide them.

Only a small number of candidates generated a document that was of sufficient overall quality to be fit for purpose.

Areas for improvement and development:

- selecting appropriate software to produce a suitable document
- 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

Task 4

Candidates were asked to produce an email to the coordinator of *Enwatch2013*. The majority of candidates successfully demonstrated the use of email software. Most candidates entered the correct e-mail address and subject heading.

Candidates were required to include a message asking if the letter was suitable, however many lost a mark by using inappropriate salutations or 'text speak' in a business email.

Areas for improvement and development:

- copying email addresses accurately
- adding suitable subject lines
- using a suitable business tone in the message

Task 5

This task consisted of two parts. First the candidates were asked to create a new folder with a given name and then move their letter and spreadsheet into the new folder. They were then asked to answer a question about passwords.

Most candidates scored very well on this task. Where marks were lost was often due to incorrect copying of the folder name or producing screen shots which did not provide sufficient evidence of completion of the task.

Most answers to the question about the strongest password were very well done with many candidates including all the alternative creditworthy answers in their response. (Unfortunately they could only be credited once.)

Areas for improvement and development:

- careful copying of items from the question paper
- producing screen shots which displays clearly the required evidence
- relating questions in the paper to the subject ICT

Pass Marks

Pass marks for this, and all other papers, can be found on the website on this link:

<http://www.edexcel.com/iwantto/Pages/grade-boundaries.aspx>

