

Examiners' Report

June 2015

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, however the spreadsheet skills demonstrated by some candidates showed a lack of ability to use functions efficiently, and to format a spreadsheet effectively or to include a formula printout. Although many candidates accessed high marks, as in previous series, there are still centres that entered candidates who lacked the knowledge to achieve a pass.

Centres should ensure that candidate 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. In some cases the candidate work was not attached to the cover sheet.

Task 1 – Internet Research

In task 1, candidates were asked to search the internet to find an image of the South African flag. In general, this task was well done with most candidates gaining either three or four marks. A minority of candidates lost a mark because they failed to provide a relevant website address. This was generally because they included the URL of a search engine such as Google. Candidates should be reminded that Google is a search engine and, therefore, does not fulfil the requirement to enter the website address used to find the required information.

Some candidates failed to include a screen shot which mean they lost two marks, one for the screen shot of the search engine plus one for the criteria they used.

Areas for improvement and development:

- Producing a screen shot that shows the search engine and criteria box
- producing the screen shot of a size that the criteria can be easily read
- recognising the difference between a search engine and a website
- copying website address (URL) accurately.

Task 2 - Spreadsheet

In task 2 candidates were presented with a spreadsheet showing costs for the Towburn U-16 Hockey Team travelling to South Africa. Candidates were asked to enter three missing pieces of data and then use a formula to calculate the total cost of the trip. In addition, they were asked to calculate the price per person using a suitable formula. Candidates were required to produce a formula view of the spreadsheet to show they had used appropriate formulae and replicated them across the three travel companies. They were then asked to format values as currency with two decimal place (£2dp) and add any other features that made the spreadsheet easier to read and understand.

Finally, they were asked to produce a chart to display the total costs for each of the three travel companies, add an appropriate title and axis labels, saving it on a separate worksheet.

Virtually all candidates scored the first three marks available for opening the correct spreadsheet and entering the missing data. Most candidates calculated the total cost correctly but some lost a mark as they included a blank row in the formula or added the individual cells rather than using the =SUM function. There were a significant number who used '=SUM' to prefix the formula for the cost per person, and others who used average or used brackets incorrectly when dividing by 20. Replication caused few problems for most.

A significant number of candidates lost marks for this task because they failed to produce a formula view printout, although they received credit for some correctly calculated values in data view.

Candidates should be encouraged to add effective formatting to improve the spreadsheet as, in many cases, multi coloured shading rendered the spreadsheet unreadable. They should be encouraged to remove any truncation to make their spreadsheets more meaningful.

Most candidates produced the bar chart from the required data range with only a very small number producing a pie chart. A number produced their charts using all the data and so had to include a legend. In some cases candidates failed to add suitable title or axis labels. Candidates should be encouraged to use the wording of the question to guide them as to a suitable title and axis labels.

Areas for improvement and development:

- producing formula view printouts
- checking that data is formatted as stated on the question paper
- using font enhancements to improve layout of spreadsheets
- appropriate and efficient use of the =SUM function
- including the correct cells in a formula
- selecting data for graphs
- adding suitable titles and axis labels to graphs and removing an unnecessary legend from a chart or graph
- printing a chart using appropriate size and proportions, on a separate sheet.

Task 3 – Presenting Information

Task 3 required candidates to produce a presentation about the forthcoming trip to South Africa. Candidates were instructed to include the image of the South African flag found in task 1 on the first (title) slide only, the logo of the Hockey Club on all five slides and a suitable image on slides 2, 3 and 4. Most candidates inserted these images correctly in the given text. However, some forgot to include the logo on the title slide or included an image on the final slide. The most common problem with the given text was the omission of the contact details.

The presentation was to be printed two slides to a page, which most candidates managed to do successfully.

Candidates were instructed to make the presentation clear and easy to read; however, a significant number of candidates failed to format the title as it was given to them in four lines, often repeating a line or adding another. The formatting added to slide titles was often inconsistent and, in some cases, these titles were omitted from the relevant slide. Almost every candidate removed the "Slide Title" text.

Those candidates who used the image of the beach in their presentations often failed to keep the given portrait orientation and distorted it to a square format. Candidates should check that they have met all the criteria for the document using the task criteria to guide them. Only a small number of candidates produced a presentation that was of sufficient quality overall to be fit for purpose and audience.

Areas for improvement and development:

- inserting text from a text file accurately
- selecting and inserting appropriate images from an image bank
- maintaining image proportions
- using appropriate image sizes , e.g. the logo smaller than the images
- using appropriate font sizes and styles for titles and body text
- applying a suitable layout of text and images
- checking a product against given criteria and for fitness for purpose.

The second part of Task 3 required candidates to create a new folder called 'SA Festival' and move only the spreadsheet and presentation into it. A significant number of candidates only scored the second mark here as they failed to use the given file name with the capitalisation as given.

Task 4 – Email

Candidates were asked to produce an e-mail to the coach's sister to ask her to send the cost details of the trip (from the attached spreadsheet) to all the parents of the Towburn U16 team. A small number of candidates picked up on the relationship and used the salutation 'Hi Sis', which like 'Dear Miss/Ms Peartree' was not appropriate.

The majority of candidates successfully demonstrated the use of email software. Most candidates entered the correct e-mail address, although many misspellings were seen. A common mistake was to leave the subject blank, although the spreadsheet was invariably attached. The majority of candidates included a suitable message requesting that the spreadsheet being sent to the parents of the U-16 team. Some candidates lost a mark by using inappropriate salutations or the incorrect capitalisation of Towburn.

Areas for improvement and development:

- copying email addresses accurately
- adding suitable subject lines
- including the correct information and capitalisation of proper names and nouns in the message.

Task 5

Candidates were asked to suggest two features that made 'U16fesT1val' a strong password for Frank's spreadsheet. Most candidates gave two answers for this task, but these were from the same mark point so only gained one mark not two.

Areas for improvement and development:

- understanding of what makes a strong password in an ICT context
- checking that answers are specific to the question.

Pass Marks

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

<http://qualifications.pearson.com/en/support/support-topics/results-certification/grade-boundaries.html?Qualification-Family=functional-skills>

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