

Examiners' Report

January 2018

Pearson Edexcel Functional Skills
ICT Level 2 (FST02)

Edexcel and BTEC Qualifications

Edexcel and BTEC qualifications are awarded by Pearson, the UK's largest awarding body. We provide a wide range of qualifications including academic, vocational, occupational and specific programmes for employers. For further information visit our qualifications websites at www.edexcel.com or www.btec.co.uk. Alternatively, you can get in touch with us using the details on our contact us page at www.edexcel.com/contactus.

Pearson: helping people progress, everywhere

Pearson aspires to be the world's leading learning company. Our aim is to help everyone progress in their lives through education. We believe in every kind of learning, for all kinds of people, wherever they are in the world. We've been involved in education for over 150 years, and by working across 70 countries, in 100 languages, we have built an international reputation for our commitment to high standards and raising achievement through innovation in education. Find out more about how we can help you and your students at: www.pearson.com/uk

January 2018

Publications Code FST02_01_1801_ER

All the material in this publication is copyright

© Pearson Education Ltd 2018

Introduction

These Functional Skills ICT Level 2 tests have been running since 2010. Some of the issues reported in previous series were still evident in responses seen during this series. A small number of learners seem poorly prepared for the test. This is particularly the case for the spreadsheet task. A pass in the test is intended to be approximately equivalent to the Grade B standard in GCSE. Responses from learners in this examination do not always reflect this standard.

It is a requirement of this test that learners should only have access to the internet during the first fifteen minutes of the test. Relevant members of staff in a small number of Centres appear to be unaware of this stipulation. Centres need to ensure that learners are reminded that there could be serious consequences if they are found to be breaching the code of conduct.

Facilities for offline email should be available for learners to use during the test. There are some centres where the use of learners' personal email accounts (e.g. Hotmail, Yahoo mail etc) was evident in the screenshots submitted. There was also some evidence seen in pupil responses that new user accounts are not being set up and data files from previous series were present. It should also be noted that ALL items in email application used for the test should have been cleared before the start of the examination week.

It is a requirement that separate user areas should be prepared before the test. These user areas should not be accessible to Learners outside their sitting of the test. Centres must provide the appropriate facilities for learners to complete all tasks within the specification. The guidelines for setting up the user accounts for the test are clearly laid out in the *Information for the Conduct of the Examination* issued for each series. Further guidance on email and internet access is available from Pearson Edexcel if required.

Another general issue that examiners often mention is that the majority of learners at some centres do not submit their work in accordance with the instruction on page two of the Cover Sheet. It is sometimes difficult for the examiner to access the work where learners have not included the pages in the correct order or punched holes in the wrong place in their work. Where printed copies of screenshots and formulae are required, learners sometimes need to be reminded that it is difficult to credit work if it cannot be read.

There were, as usual, five tasks to be completed during the test. These were based on a scenario about a trip to Oban in Scotland.

Task 1 – Internet Research

This task was generally well completed by Learners. In this series, learners were asked to use the internet to find an image and some information about McCaig's Tower in Oban and other sites nearby.

In Task 1(a), Learners generally succeeded in using a search engine to find a suitable image. Where marks were lost, it was due to one or more of the following:

- failure to include the screenshot of the search engine
- unreadable criteria – often due to screenshots which were too small or cropped too much
- inserting a gallery of images or a screen shot of the whole desktop
- use of the search engine or derivative URL rather than the correct source URL for the information.

In Task 1(b), Learners were mostly successful in obtaining the website address of the Cruachan hydroelectric station and the year in which the building of McCaig's Tower was started though some reported the incorrect date of when the planning was started.

Areas for improvement and development:

- understanding the term "search engine"
- understanding the term "search criteria"
- producing screenshots which show the required information in a readable manner
- copying website addresses accurately and completely
- acknowledging correctly the source of information and images.

Task 2 – Spreadsheet

There were seven sub-tasks for the spreadsheet activity. Learners were presented with data about payments made by people joining the coach trip to Oban.

Learners were asked to calculate:

- the total paid during the period given
- the cost of the trip using a spreadsheet function (=IF in this case)
- the balance to pay.

They were then asked to use a spreadsheet function (=IF), to display 'yes' or 'no' depending on whether the cost had been paid in full. Learners were required to sort the table using multiple columns and format the spreadsheet before producing a chart to display the age of each person on the trip. It has been noted that learners in this series have performed better than in earlier series in using spreadsheet functions for conditional statements. However, there is still frequently inappropriate use of the SUM function in simple arithmetic calculations.

These sub-tasks required the printing of the formula view of the spreadsheet. It is very disappointing to see how often the majority of learners at a small number of centres did not produce a formula view of the spreadsheet. Centres should inform learners that annotating the spreadsheet with the formula will not gain the marks for the formula. Many learners at a small number of centres provided several screenshots of the spreadsheet so that some formulae could be credited from the formula bar. However, this is not recommended and is unnecessary when the formula view is so easily produced (CTRL + ` on Microsoft Windows systems). Learners should also be reminded to ensure that the full formulae are visible. Examiners report that often the correct formula is used (as seen from the results in the data view) but the complete formula is not visible to enable full credit to be given.

The sorting of the data was not well done. A lot of scripts were seen where learners sorted only the first two columns in the table so that the table of data became mixed up. Data integrity is a critical feature of functionality in sorting a table of data.

Formatting the spreadsheet was not as well done as usual. Some learners did not gain credit because their use of borders and shading did not enhance the presentation of the data. Vertical shading is rarely effective when much of spreadsheet work relies on reading across the rows. It was also noted that learners who did not gain full marks had not read or followed the instruction to format the currency to 0 decimal places.

Learners were asked to produce a chart to show the age. Most learners produced the expected bar/column chart using the appropriate data. However, a number of learners failed to include appropriate titles and axis labels. The more successful learners used the wording of the question as a suitable title. Many learners seemed to rely too much on the default title

provided by the software ('Age') and so did not include key words from the question (eg. 'Oban').

Areas for improvement and development: (not all these were assessed on this occasion)

- formatting a spreadsheet
 - currency
 - decimal places
 - appropriate borders and shading
 - word wrapping
 - appropriate row heights and column widths
 - use of text formatting to enhance visual clarity e.g. bold, italics, font size
- using formulae
 - simple formulae using arithmetic symbols (+, -, / and *) [without using the SUM function]
 - using functions e.g. SUM, IF, MAX, MIN and VLOOKUP/LOOKUP where appropriate
 - using efficient formulae (eg using SUM for adding up a range of cells)
 - using absolute and relative cell references
- sorting and filtering
 - on one column
 - on multiple columns (secondary sorting or sorting within a sort)
 - expanding selection to include full table in a sort
 - using appropriate filters to show selected data from a table
- charts
 - pie charts, line graphs and column or bar charts with one or more series of data
 - understanding the appropriateness of different chart types
 - inserting a suitable title on the chart
 - using legends where appropriate and removing unnecessary legends (for single series charts)
 - axis labels where relevant
- printing
 - printing in data view
 - printing in formula view
 - ensuring that cell contents are not truncated in printouts
 - adding footers with Learner details
 - fitting a spreadsheet to one page
 - making sure that colour schemes used are still readable when printed in monochrome.

Task 3 – Presentation of information

Task 3 usually brings together information from the internet research, the spreadsheet task and text and images from the data files to produce a document aimed at a particular audience. Often the learners will be expected to select appropriate text and images to produce an integrated document.

In this series, learners were asked to produce an information sheet using the text file, the Images folder and answers obtained from the internet research. They were required to format the schedule as a table. As is usual with this qualification, learners are expected to be able to select appropriate items from the data file.

Most were able to insert the required information in appropriate locations. Some very attractive information sheets were produced, but sadly these did not gain full marks because they did not include all the required elements. Learners should be advised to check carefully that they have fulfilled the criteria identified in the question paper. At Level 2, it is expected that learners will be able to use the proofing tools within the software to produce documents which are largely error free.

Many learners also lost marks due to poor layout skills with images that appeared to be randomly arranged with no apparent connection to the text. Often images were truncated or overlapped the text. Also, it was observed by examiners that the logo image sometimes dominated the information sheet with the other images much reduced in size. These issues often resulted in learners losing fitness for purpose marks.

Areas for improvement and development: (not all these were assessed on this occasion)

- selection of appropriate software for producing an on-screen or paper-based presentation of information
- integration of information from a variety of sources including text, images, tables and graphs
- consideration of suitability in selection of text/images for an audience and purpose
- use of formatting techniques appropriately:
 - text enhancements – bold, italic, underline, font sizes
 - selection of font styles
 - selection of suitable font sizes for a document
 - hyphenation
 - text wrap and alignment
 - checking for consistency in font sizes and styles
- checking the printout for truncation of text and/or images
- checking that all the criteria stated in the question paper have been met
- consideration of fitness for purpose
- consideration of audience.

Task 4 – Communication: preparing an email

Learners were asked to prepare an email with a suitable subject and an attachment. The quality of work for this task, particularly in the copying of email addresses and the content of the message is too often below the standard expected at Level 2. Some learners do not appear to check that email addresses are correctly entered. Since incorrect email addresses will not reach their intended recipient, this is a critical aspect of functionality in this task.

Examiners continue to find that email messages are not suitable in tone or content. Often the messages are not spell-checked or grammar-checked and the tone is not suitable for a formal message. For example "Hi" and "Hey" are considered to be inappropriate ways to address business email messages. The expectation at Level 2 is an appropriate greeting followed by an accurate, concise message which meets the criteria in the question paper.

It was also noted by examiners that several learners did not read the question paper correctly and attached the information sheet and requested feedback on the quality of this document. It would seem that some learners have become so accustomed to attaching the document from Task 3 (which has been required quite frequently in previous series), that they failed to read the question that required attachment of the spreadsheet. Another area which suggested that learners were not reading the paper carefully was in producing a message which asked Armand to send a reminder to people who have not paid in full.

Many examiners continue to comment on learners who fail to gain marks because the screenshot evidence provided is not readable. Learners are expected to check the printout of their work to ensure that examiners will be able to read the contents – especially email addresses, subject lines and attachment details. They are reminded of this in the evidence box on the paper.

As mentioned previously, some examiners report that there are still several centres where there is evidence that learners are accessing the internet during this task and using online accounts – often these are the learners' personal accounts. This is unacceptable and a breach of the code of practice for this examination. Learners who access online accounts may face disqualification for these breaches. Examiners also noted that some learners seemed to be using an existing account with several (often personal) contacts already in the address book and messages in the inbox/outbox/sent boxes.

Some examiners have reported that learners at some centres do not appear to have access to an offline mail application and produce 'emails' in word processing software. Since these do not provide suitable evidence of attachments or ability to use email, centres that do not provide the learners with offline email clients are penalising their learners unnecessarily.

There are many ways of producing the evidence using offline account systems – for example the setting up of Outlook or Outlook Express accounts as part of the examination account used by the learner. Centres are reminded that the accounts set up for the test should be cleared of previous contents. Further guidance is available on the Frequently Asked Questions section of the Edexcel Functional Skills website.

Areas for improvement and development:

- selection of appropriate offline email client software
- careful copying of text from the question paper
- accurate copying of email addresses
- attachment of correct files to an email
- using a suitable subject line for an email
- producing a simple concise message which meets the criteria in the instructions
- using appropriate language for business email messages
- ensuring that screen shot evidence is readable.

Task 5 - Using ICT

Often responses to Task 5 are entered at the end of the Responses document used for Task 1. Many learners print out and include multiple copies of this document. This is unnecessary. A single completed copy is all that is required. Instructions to print at Task 1 are included just in case learners fail to complete the full test.

In this series, learners were asked to answer questions about identifying signs of a secure website and ways of avoiding copyright abuse. There were many who gained full marks in Task 5. Where marks were lost, it was often because answers were too vague or not appropriate.

Areas for improvement and development:

- identifying signs on a website that it is a secure site
- understanding copyright legislation in using images from the Internet.

Pass mark for FST02 in January 2018

Maximum mark	50
Pass mark	36
UMS mark	6

Pearson Education Limited. Registered company number 872828
with its registered office at 80 Strand, London WC2R 0RL

Ofqual



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

