Examiner's Report

Set 24

Pearson Edexcel Functional Skills
ICT Level 1 (FST01)

GENERAL COMMENTS

The On-Demand Functional Skills ICT tests have been available since 2012. This paper reflected the content, layout and degree of difficulty of all previous papers both paper-based and online.

It is a requirement of this test that learners should only have access to the internet during the first 15 minutes of the test. Invigilators 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, etc) was evident in the screenshots submitted. There was also some evidence seen in learner responses that new user accounts are not being set up and files not related to the test were present in the test folder or screenshot evidence of work. It should also be noted that ALL items in email clients used for the test should have been cleared before the start of the test.

It is a requirement that separate user areas, not accessible to learners outside their sitting of the test, should be prepared before 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* available on the Pearson website. Further guidance on email and internet access is available from Edexcel if required.

Another general issue that examiners often mention is that the zip folder of evidence for a learner is missing documents that were completed during the test. This leads to delays in processing the marking of the work as the centre must be contacted to check whether further evidence is available. Missing work is always to the detriment of the learners. Centre staff should make sure that the zip folder is named in accordance with the instructions published by Pearson.

It should be noted that it is the responsibility of Centre staff to print out the copy of the relevant test paper. Electronic copies should not be made available to the learners. With on-demand tests, it is also the responsibility of Centre staff to ensure that the contents of the test are stored securely. The paper copies of the test must be collected in at the end of the test session and locked in a secure place.

Centre staff should also ensure that learners receive the correct paper copies of the question paper and electronic copies of the data files for the test set for which they have been registered. There are occasions when this is not the case and learners have submitted evidence for tests for which they were not registered. Sometimes, this has been for a test that the learner has previously attempted.

There were five tasks to be completed by learners based on a fictional toddler group, planning a trip to Marwell Zoo. Many learners could have secured far higher marks by following and carrying out the specific instructions in the paper.

Task 1 – Internet research

Learners were required to search the internet and find the name of the café at Marwell Zoo. The name and the website from which it was sourced were to be entered in the Responses document which was saved in the learner's test folder. As with all Functional Skills ICT exam papers, the information was required for use in Task 3.

Most learners provided the required screen shot of a search engine within which appropriate key words were visible but, as always, there were those who presented the result of the search – in this case a screen shot of a page from the Marwell Zoo website rather than the search engine/key words.

Learners should be aware that a search engine is not a source URL for information and images. The website address (URL) should be provided not a hyperlink.

The correct name was inserted into the Responses document by most.

Areas for improvement and development:
- reading the task and instructions carefully
- checking retrieved information matches requirements
- identifying URL source of information
- differentiating between a search engine and a web page.

Task 2 - Spreadsheet

A spreadsheet was given for the learners to use in Task 2. The spreadsheet stored details of attendance at the toddler group in the last year.

The main requirements of Task 2 were to enter values into specific cells; calculate using addition, subtraction and multiplication; replicate formulae; sort the data; format the spreadsheet and create a bar chart to display the number of sessions attended by each child. Although many learners scored well on this task, there were examples of limited spreadsheet skills.

In Task 2(a) most learners accurately edited the given values for the specific child on the spreadsheet.

Task 2(b) involved a simple calculation using the =SUM() function of given values in adjacent cells to calculate total sessions for each child. Those who recognised the requirements used the correct efficient function. However, a disappointingly large number of learners used a less efficient formula and added each cell to the other. Some lost marks here by using =SUM() and then adding each individual cell.

A mark was also available at Task 2(b) for the correct replication of the total formula in column L from L6 to L13. Irrespective of the accuracy of the formula, most learners secured this mark.

Task 2(c) involved the calculation of the average attendance for each session. Most learners used the efficient =AVERAGE() function, omitting the blank row. Others used an efficient function but included the blank row. Some used =SUM() dividing the total calculated by 8 for the number of children.

Another mark was available at Task 2(c) for correct replication from column B to K of the average function. Irrespective of the accuracy of the formula, most learners secured this mark.

Task 2(d) required the learners to use a primary sort on the child column to sort the table of data into alphabetical order of child. Whilst most learners achieved this, some sorted only the child column, thereby losing data integrity. Furthermore, come learners did not read the task carefully and sorted the data into reverse alphabetical order.

In Task 2(e) there was a specific instruction to format the average attendance as whole numbers and to add any other formatting to make the spreadsheet easy to understand; many learners secured all the marks available for Task 2(e).

Formatting to whole numbers was accessible to most. Borders or other enhancements, such as shading, were often included. However, overall, the formatting of the spreadsheet was not effective nor done well.

In Task 2(f) learners were required to create a bar chart to display the total number of sessions attended by each child. As always, the chart proved outside the scope of many learners and few scored well on this task. Obviously, a pie chart was not suitable, although there were some submitted as evidence, and as long as they were suitably labelled this mark was secured. The majority devised a bar chart as required. Although clearly defined in the question paper and readily identifiable in the spreadsheet itself, many learners failed to select the correct data range of A6:A13 and L6:L13. Others included A5 and L5 in their data selection.

Despite the wording of the task and clear indication of an appropriate title, learners frequently included incomplete or unsuitable titles. Most learners include appropriate axis labels, although a significant number did not. The title and axis labels should have consistent capitalisation and spelling should be checked for accuracy. Frequently, legends were retained despite being a single series chart.

Areas for improvement and development:
- efficient formulae
- correct syntax
- appropriate and effective formatting
- selecting specific data
- devising appropriate charts correctly labelled with titles, axis labels and legends
- consistent capitalisation and correct spelling used for title and axis labels.

Task 3 – Presentation of information

In Task 3, learners were asked to create a presentation about the zoo to show to parents

Learners were required to include: the title and text from the given file MarwellSet24L1, the name of the café found on the internet in Task 1, the logo and three other appropriate images from the ImagesSet24L1 folder.

Although there were some good attempts at this task and some reasonable marks secured, creating and presenting a functional and viable well-balanced presentation proved problematic to many.

Few learners omitted the task entirely. Most used the correct presentation software, although there were one or two examples of word processing software.

The expected approach is that learners will copy and paste from the given text file. However, not all learners secured the mark for incorporating title and text as given. Whilst it is acceptable to re-arrange the order of the given text, it is essential that learners check that they have still included all the content using the given capitalisation, spelling and punctuation. Slide titles were sometimes omitted and the original capitalisation and spelling was not retained. Some learners seem unaware of the expectation that the title of any product should be enhanced in some way for it to stand out. The words 'Title slide:' were sometimes retained.

The name of the café was included in the correct location by most learners.

Disappointingly large numbers of learners seemed unaware of the expected inter-relationship of size between logo and images; all too often the logo was larger than the included images. The placement and size of the images is often not considered. Overall, images were located with the relevant text despite the issues with size.

Most learners used appropriate and legible font sizes and styles. It is important for learners to recognise that the size of text in a presentation is important and that font sizes less than 20 will make text less legible when presented on a large screen. Most learners managed to use a consistent font and style for the text and made the individual slide titles stand out by using bold or underline on that element.

Various opportunities for the incorporation of additional formatting features were presented by this task. For example, a slide design, bullets, wrapping images, text alignment. Many learners secured the marks available for demonstrating these skills. However, as always, there were learners who failed to consider the content or nature of the product and its intended use and incorporated inappropriate features such as callouts and auto shapes or, conversely, nothing at all.

Most learners added a suitable transition between the slides, but these were not always consistent.

Very few learners secured the fitness for purpose marks because of erroneous or omitted content, spelling and capitalisation of the inserted text, additional or missing punctuation and hyphenation, inconsistent spacing or lack of overall balance within the document.

Whilst most learners devised a suitable filename for the product, many called it Task 3 or gave their own name, neither of which are considered suitable in terms of conventions, file storage and organisation.

Areas for improvement and development:
- software selection
- following instructions in respect of incorporating provided and sourced material
- retaining provided material as given – all text with accurate spelling and punctuation
- recognising purpose, use and audience of product and formatting accordingly
- considering the final layout to ensure the product is balanced and suitable for the intended purpose
- use of a suitable filename.

Task 3(b) – Using ICT

In this series, USING ICT appears in this task as well as Task 5. Learners were asked to create a folder with a given name and move their presentation into the new folder.

There were many learners who gained full marks in Task 5.

In Task 5, where learners lost marks, it was often because they had not copied the folder name as given in the question paper, sometimes changing the capitalisation and spelling. Often, they had included other files in the folder.

Areas for improvement and development:

- able to create folders and files with given names as directed
- understand the difference between 'move' and 'copy'
- ensure only the relevant file(s) are in the folder.

Task 4 – Communication: preparing an email

Task 4 required learners to email the spreadsheet used in Task 2 as an attachment to Aylsha Fredricks at Torvey Toddlers. The email address was provided. Although there were examples of the use of personal email accounts, most learners appeared to have access to offline email software as expected.

Most learners scored reasonably well on this task but there were examples of careless and erroneous copying of the address and inaccurate, incomplete or unsuitable subject lines. There were instances of the subject and attachment being omitted entirely or the wrong document chosen.

Most learners included some, if not all, of necessary elements in their message. The most frequently recurring issues with the message were the absence of any reference to the specific child, or the incorrect spelling or capitalisation of the child's name when it was mentioned.

There were countless examples of inappropriate and out of context language and tone of the message. Frequently there were omitted or incorrect salutations. 'Hi' and 'Hey' were used regularly and learners used text speak or lower-case 'i'. Aylsha was often misspelt. Some learners also did not use correct capitalisation and punctuation at the beginning and end of sentences.

Areas for improvement and development:
- copying the addressee details as given
- use of subject line and choice of subject that is relevant to the message
- devising appropriate message to match requirements of the task
- using correct punctuation and capitalisation at beginning and end of sentences
- language and tone of message.

Task 5 – Using ICT

Task 5 required learners to give two ways of minimising the risk to data on Aylsha's computer from viruses when she uses the internet. Answers were recorded in the Responses document.

The task included the fact that Aylsha had been advised about not clicking on pop-ups, so any reference to this in the learner response could not be rewarded. Despite the importance of the issue, many learners seemed unaware of the various alternatives available other than downloading and using any virus software which was the most popular answer. The fact that the anti-virus software is only effective if kept up to date was not mentioned by many. Some learners referred to emails which was not the focus of the task.

Areas for improvement and development:
- answering the question asked
- knowledge of a range of methods of reducing risk to data from viruses in a given context.

Pass mark for FST01 Set 24

Maximum mark	**50**
Pass mark	**36**
UMS mark	**6**