Examiners' Report

Set 20

Pearson Edexcel Functional Skills
ICT Level 1 (FST01)

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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 has to 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 college and a planned fund-raising event. Large numbers of learners could have secured far higher marks by simply following and carrying out the specific instructions in the paper.

Task 1 – Internet Research

Learners were required to search the internet to find the General Enquiries telephone number at the Guide Dogs charity. The telephone number and the website where it was found 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 found was required for use in Task 3.

A significant number of learners provided the required screen shot of a search engine within which appropriate key words were visible and accurately recorded the telephone number and the source URL in the appropriate locations on the Responses document.

Several learners omitted some of the required key words and the resultant telephone number found was not necessarily that for General Enquiries. Unfortunately, as always, many learners presented a screen shot of the result of the search rather than the search engine and key words and recorded the search engine as their source for the information.

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

Task 2 – Spreadsheet

A spreadsheet was provided for the learners to use in Task 2. The spreadsheet stored details of income and costs associated with charity donations for the past four years.

The main requirements of Task 2 were to enter values into specific cells; calculate using addition, subtraction; calculate an average; replicate formulae; format the spreadsheet and create a bar chart to display the calculated values of charity donation for each year. Although many learners scored well on this task, there were examples of limited spreadsheet skills.

In Task 2(a) most learners entered accurately the two values into the specified (empty) cells on the spreadsheet. However, there were a handful of instances where the values were omitted entirely or randomly placed elsewhere on the spreadsheet.

Task 2(b) involved the addition of given values in a contiguous block to calculate total income for each year. Although two marks were available for the required formula of =SUM(B5:B9); it was disappointing to note the frequency of the use of the =B5+B6+B7… or the incorrect =SUM(B5+B6+B7…) approach. The use of which limits the marks available.

Task 2(c), similar to Task 2(b), involved addition of given values in a contiguous block to calculate total cost for each year. Two marks were available for the required formula of =SUM(B13:B17). It was disappointing to note the frequency of the use of the =B5+B6+B7… or the incorrect =SUM(B5+B6+B7…) approach; again limiting the marks available.

Using the prompt provided in the question paper, Task 2(d) required learners to subtract total cost (calculated in Task 2(c)) from the total income (calculated in Task 2(b)) using a simple =B10-B18 formula. Despite the prompt including the word minus, it was disappointing to note the number of learners who added the two values together rather than subtracting one from the other.

A mark was available at Task 2(d) for correct replication across columns B to E of the three formulae included at Tasks 2(b), 2(c) and 2(d). Irrespective of the accuracy of the formulae, the majority of learners secured this mark.

Task 2(e) required learners to use a formula in a specific cell (B22) to calculate the average charity donation. Clearly some learners are confident with the use of the =AVERAGE function and there were many examples of accurate calculations. Some learners took the mathematical approach of adding the values and dividing by four rather than using the =AVERAGE function; this approach limited the marks available. Where formulae were included these were usually in cell B22 as expected, but it was disappointing to note that some learners omitted this task entirely.

In Task 2(f) there was a specific instruction to format currency values to currency (£ with two decimal places) and to add any other formatting features

to make the spreadsheet easy to understand. Many learners secured all the marks available for Task 2(f). However, whilst formatting to currency was accessible to most, with others adding borders, large numbers of learners failed to add any additional formatting whatsoever.

Task 2(g) required learners to create a bar chart to display the calculated charity donation for each year. As always, the chart proved a challenge to many learners and few scored well on this task. There were some pie charts, but the majority created a bar chart as expected. Many learners selected the correct data range of B3:E3 and B20:E20 but there were some who used total cost from row 18 instead of charity donation from row 20. Despite the wording of the task and clear indication of an appropriate title, frequently learners included incomplete or unsuitable titles. The axis labels, where included, were usually correct and most legends were removed as expected.

Areas for improvement and development:
- efficient formulae including the use of =AVERAGE
- correct syntax
- appropriate and effective formatting
- selecting specific data
- devising appropriate charts correctly labelled with titles, axis labels and legends.

Task 3 – Presentation of information

In Task 3(a), learners were asked to create an information sheet to tell staff about the charity fundraising.

Learners were required to include the text from the given file InformationSet20L1, the telephone number found on the internet in Task 1, the average charity donation calculated in Task 2(e), the logo and two other appropriate images from the ImagesSet20L1 folder.

Although there were some very good attempts and some reasonable marks secured, this task clearly presented a challenge to many learners who seem unable to incorporate all the required content and recognise the various textual elements so they could format them appropriately and consistently.

Few learners omitted the task entirely. Most used the expected word processing or desktop publishing software. Despite the specific instruction to use one page of A4 portrait, there were some two-page documents.

The expected approach is that learners will copy and paste from the given text file. However, not all learners secured the mark for incorporating all the given text. Titles were frequently omitted and the original capitalisation and spelling was not retained. Some learners seem unaware of the expectation that the title of any document should be enhanced in some way in order for it to stand out.

Most logos were at the top or bottom, above or below the body text as expected and, although the breakfast was included by a handful of learners,

most incorporated two suitable images from those given. Disappointingly large numbers of learners seemed unaware of the expected inter-relationship of size between logo and images; all too often the logo was far larger than the included images.

The average charity donation from Task 2(e) and the telephone number from Task 1 were inserted as expected by the majority. However, many failed to review the provided text file and there were innumerable examples of 'to charity.' after the donation amount and the omission of the full stop after the telephone number.

As mentioned, many learners seemed unable to recognise the various textual elements and format them appropriately and consistently. In this document, it was expected that the title, three sub-headings and the body text would be differentiated by formatting – the title above and larger than everything; the sub-headings consistent in font size and style above and enhanced from their associated paragraphs and the body text consistent. Many learners enhance the insertions – in this case the average charity donation and telephone number – which is neither necessary nor required. A range of additional formatting features were seen including page borders, bullets and text wrapping of images but these are not always done well so do not enhance the product.

Very few learners secured the fitness for purpose marks as a result of erroneous or omitted content, inconsistent spacing or lack of overall balance within the document.

Areas for improvement and development:
- following instructions in respect of incorporating provided and sourced material
- discriminating between title, sub-headings and body text
- consistent formatting of related elements.

Task 3(b) required learners to create a new folder called TenTrees Charity and move their information sheet only into that new folder.

Many learners secured both marks available although a surprisingly large number incorrectly capitalised or misspelt TenTrees Charity. There were a significant number of folder names with missing/superfluous spaces.

Areas for improvement and development:
- reading the task and instructions carefully
copying the name as given.

Task 4 – Communication: preparing an email

Task 4 required learners to email the information sheet created in Task 3 as an attachment to Holly Mills, the organiser of the charity fund-raising event. 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 as always there were examples of careless and erroneous copying of the address and inaccurate, incomplete or unsuitable subject lines. There were instances of the attachment being omitted entirely or the wrong document chosen; in some cases, the full information sheet was pasted within the body of the email.

Most learners included the necessary elements in their message and asked Holly if the details about the parachute jump *(included in the information sheet)* are correct. The most frequently recurring issue with the message was the absence of any reference to the parachute jump.

There were a disappointing number of examples of inappropriate and out of context language and tone of the messages. Frequently there were omitted salutations. 'Hi' and 'Hey' were used regularly with the inclusion of text speak or lower-case i.

Areas for improvement and development:
- copying the addressee details as given
- use of subject line and choice of subject
- devising appropriate message to match requirements of question
- language and tone of message.

Task 5 - Using ICT

Learners used the Responses document to record their answers to this task which required learners to give two ways a suggested password (abigail) could be made stronger.

Most learners submitted two suggestions but often the same answer was repeated. It is surprising how many learners are unaware of the recommendation for a minimum of 8 characters or that alphanumeric characters and case should be mixed.

Areas for improvement and development:
- answering the question asked
- knowledge of a range of features of a strong password.

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