

Examiners' Report

Set 21

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 history society with a plan to release a CD. 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 an image of a town crier. The single image 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, in this case an image, 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 gallery of images rather than the search engine/key words.

A single image was pasted in to the Responses document by most, but some learners included a gallery. Undoubtedly the sourcing of an image proves problematic to many and frequently the search engine was recorded as the source URL.

Areas for improvement and development:

- reading the task and instructions carefully
- checking retrieved information matches requirements
- identifying URL source of an image
- 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 costs based on order quantities of 1500, 2000 and 3000 CDs.

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

In Task 2(a) most learners accurately entered the values into the specified (empty) cells on the spreadsheet. However, there were several instances of 'Motoring' being incorrectly capitalised and not 'as given'. The value 432 should have been entered 3 times. Unfortunately, some learners appeared not to understand the notation B14:D14 and entered 432 in cell B14 only.

Task 2(b)(i) involved a simple multiplication of given values in adjacent cells to calculate total income by multiplying the number of CDs (B4) by the selling price (B5) with the outcome in B6. Those who recognised the requirements used the correct formula of =B4*B5 although there were some who entered =SUM(B4*B5). However, a disappointingly large number of learners added the two values.

A mark was also available at Task 2(b)(i) for the correct replication of the total income formula from columns B to D. Irrespective of the accuracy of the formula, most learners secured this mark.

Task 2(b)(ii) involved the addition of given values in a contiguous block to calculate the total cost for each quantity of CDs. Two marks were available for the required formula of =SUM(B9:B14) and it was disappointing to note the frequency that =B9+B10+B11... or the incorrect =SUM(B9+B10+B11...) was used. Both of which limit the marks available.

Using the prompt provided in the question paper, Task 2(b)(iii) required learners to calculate the profit for each quantity of CDs by subtracting the total cost (calculated in Task 2(b)(ii)) from the total income (calculated in Task 2(b)(i)) using a simple formula, =B6-B15. Despite the prompt including the word minus, it was disappointing to note the number of learners who added or multiplied the two values together rather than subtracting one from the other.

Another mark was available at Task 2(b)(iii) for correct replication from column B to D of the profit formula. Irrespective of the accuracy of the formula, most learners secured this mark.

In Task 2(c) there was a specific instruction to format all currency values to currency (£ with two decimal places) and to add any other formatting to make the spreadsheet easy to understand; many learners secured all the marks available for Task 2(c).

However, whilst formatting to currency was accessible to most, some learners failed to identify that the quantity of CDs was not currency and included that in their formatting. Truncation was removed by many and borders or other enhancements often included. However, overall, the formatting of the spreadsheet was not effective or done well.

In Task 2(d) learners were required to create a bar chart to display the six costs for each quantity of CDs ordered. As always, the chart proved outside the scope of many learners and few scored well on this task. Obviously, a pie chart could not include all the necessary data but there were several erroneous attempts. Some learners created three separate pie charts, one for each quantity of CDs. 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 A9:D14 often including the total cost in their data selection.

Despite the wording of the task and clear indication of an appropriate title, learners frequently included incomplete or unsuitable titles. The multi series (column) content clearly proved troublesome in terms of axis labels for some, but often these were correct. Frequently, legends were removed or remained as Series 1, Series 2, etc rather than being customised to reflect the three different quantities of CDs.

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.

Task 3 – Presentation of information

In Task 3, learners were asked to create a flyer to tell people about the CD.

Learners were required to include: the text from the given file FlyerSet21L1, the selling price of the CD from CDcostSet21L1, the image found on the internet in Task 1, the logo and one other appropriate image from the ImagesSet21L1 folder.

Although there were some good attempts at this task and some reasonable marks secured, creating and presenting a functional and viable flyer proved problematic to many. Often, learners seemed unable to incorporate all the required content and format the flyer consistently and sensibly.

Few learners omitted the task entirely. Most used the expected word processing or desktop publishing software. Changing the page layout to present the flyer as A5 portrait proved a challenge to many. There were several examples of postcard (A6) and other small sizes and a significant number of A4 flyers.

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. 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. The final sentence was often omitted in the learner's re-arrangement of 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. The word 'Title:' was often retained. Some learners seem unaware of the expectation that the title of any document will be enhanced in some way in order that it stands out.

The price of the CD from the spreadsheet was identified and included by most learners. However, changing the sentence and placing the £2.99 incorrectly before the word 'only' was often seen. Many learners failed to review the text file and identify the word 'from' at the end of the sentence after the price.

The image from Task 1 was included more often than not and most logos were at the top or bottom, above or below the body text as expected. Although the image of the book and pencils was included by a handful of learners, most incorporated the bell or sheep from those provided. 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.

In this product, other than the title from the body text, there was no differentiation of the content necessary. Most learners used appropriate and legible font sizes and styles and, on this occasion, it was not necessary for these to be consistent.

Various opportunities for the incorporation of additional formatting features were presented by this task. For example, a page border, 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.

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:

- software selection of alternative page sizes
- following instructions in respect of incorporating provided and sourced material
- retaining provided material as given
- recognising purpose, use and audience of document and formatting accordingly.

Task 4 – Communication: preparing an email

Task 4 required learners to email the flyer created in Task 3 as an attachment to Brione Woods, the secretary of the History Society. 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 attachment being omitted entirely or the wrong document chosen; in some cases, the flyer was pasted within the body of the email.

Most learners included some, if not all, of necessary elements in their message and asked Brione to send the flyer to all past and present members of Westborne History Society. The most frequently recurring issues with the message were the absence of any reference to 'past and present' and the incorrect spelling or capitalisation of Westborne History Society 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. Brione was often misspelt.

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

Task 5(a) required learners to create a new folder called 'Sounds CD' and move both their spreadsheet and flyer into that new folder. Many learners secured both marks available although a surprisingly large number of learners incorrectly capitalised or misspelt 'Sounds CD'. Some failed to move both documents into the folder.

Areas for improvement and development:

- reading the task and instructions carefully
- copying the name as given
- moving (all) specified documents into new folder.

Task 5(b) required learners to give two ways of minimising the risk to data on Brione's computer from viruses. Answers were recorded in the Responses document.

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. Learners often thought that the emails themselves posed the risk rather than the email attachments.

Areas for improvement and development:

- answering the question asked
- knowledge of a range of methods of reducing risk to data from viruses.

Pass mark for FST01 Set 21

Maximum mark	50
Pass mark	36
UMS mark	6

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