

Examiners' Report

Set 19

Pearson Edexcel Functional Skills ICT Level 2 (FST02)

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General Comments

The On-Demand Functional Skills ICT tests have been available since 2012. 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 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.

SPECIFIC SERIES RELATED COMMENTS

There were, as usual, five tasks to be completed during the test. These were based on a scenario about a swimming club raising money for a local hospital.

Task 1 – Internet research

This task was generally well completed by learners. In this series, learners were asked to use the internet to find some information about swimming the English Channel.

In Task 1(a), learners generally succeeded in using a search engine to find the name of the first woman to swim the English Channel. Where marks were lost, it was due to one or more of the following:

- failure to include the screenshot of the search engine
- poor criteria or screenshots of the search engine that did not include the criteria box
- incorrect identification of the swimmer
- 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 date when Captain Matthew Webb swam the channel and how long the swim took. Where learners occasionally lost marks, it was due to incorrect responses, often inserting the incorrect year or not responding with the full date.

Areas for improvement and development:

- understanding the term 'search engine'
- understanding the term 'search criteria'
- producing screenshots which show the required information
- copying website addresses accurately and completely
- acknowledging correctly the source of information.

Task 2 – Spreadsheet

There were six sub-tasks for the spreadsheet activity. Learners were presented with age, fitness level and lung capacity data for members of the swimming club. Learners were asked to enter formulae to:

- enter 'Yes' or 'No' if a swimmer can take part in the sponsored relay
- calculate the maximum swim distance based on the lung capacity, age and fitness level
- calculate the total maximum distance for the swimmers able to take part in the relay.

During this task, learners were required to filter the data to show the details of swimmers able to take part and save the filtered list as a new spreadsheet with a given file name. Learners were then required to format the spreadsheet before producing a chart to display the maximum swim distance for each swimmer.

It has been noted that learners' performance using conditional statements in this series was better than in earlier series. However, there is still frequently inappropriate use of the =SUM function in simple arithmetic calculations. For example, in this test in the calculation of the maximum swim distance. There were a number of learners who did not gain full credit for the calculation of maximum swim distance because they did not include brackets in the correct place in the formula.

The filtering of the spreadsheet was generally well done by learners. However, examiners noted that learners frequently lost marks because they failed to save the spreadsheet with the given file name. It should be noted that where learners are instructed to use specific folder or file names and titles, they are expected to copy the format of the text (capitalisation and spacing) as given in either the question paper or the data files.

Formatting the spreadsheet was generally well done. 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 values in column G to one decimal place.

Learners were asked to produce a chart to show the maximum swim distance for each swimmer eligible for the relay. Most learners produced the required bar or column chart with the appropriate data. However, a number of learners failed to include suitable titles and axis labels. The more successful learners used the wording of the task as a suitable title. Many learners seemed to rely too much on the default title provided by the software ('Maximum Swim Distance') and so did not include key words from the question ('swimmer'). It should also be noted that some learners lost marks because the chart was not interactive with the original data – usually because either the data had been copied as values to a new worksheet or the chart had been moved to a new location as an image. This resulted in charts that would not respond to changes in the original data.

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
 - ensuring data integrity is maintained during sorting
 - using appropriate filters to show selected data from a table (without deleting unrequired data)
- charts
 - pie charts, line graphs and column or bar charts with one or more series of data
 - selecting correct data ranges for charts
 - understanding the appropriateness of different chart types
 - inserting a suitable title on the chart (using wording in the test paper to help identify key words)
 - using legends where appropriate and removing unnecessary legends (for single series charts)
 - axis labels where relevant
 - using consistent capitalisation and correct spelling on added text (usually chart title and axis labels)
 - saving charts as a separate worksheet (rather than as an object on a worksheet)
 - ensuring that the chart is interactive with the source data.

Task 3 – Presentation of information

Task 3 usually brings together information from the internet research, the spreadsheet tasks, the text file and images from the Images folder to produce a product aimed at a particular audience. Often the learners will also be expected to select appropriate text and images to produce an integrated product.

In this series, learners were asked to create a sponsor form using the text file, the Images folder and answers obtained from the internet research. They were required to include a table for sponsors to indicate their willingness to support the event.

Most learners were able to insert the required information in appropriate locations. Some very attractive sponsor forms were produced but sadly did not gain full marks because they did not include all the required elements. In this series, learners lost marks where they did not follow the instruction to include a table with given dimensions. It was expected that the information in the text data file would be used to provide appropriate heading for the table. Learners should be advised to check carefully that they have fulfilled all the criteria identified in the question paper.

As is usual with this qualification, learners are expected to be able to select appropriate items from the data file. In this series, there were examples seen of learners including images from the images folder of the boat and runners.

At Level 2, it is expected that learners will be able to use the proofing tools within the software to check that the final product is error free. Where inserts have to replace prompt text, it is expected that learners will check that they have not inadvertently deleted other text or inserted unnecessary spaces. When entering the required information, learners are expected to follow the instructions given in the text file.

Many learners lost marks because of poor layout skills with images that appeared to arranged randomly with no apparent connection to the text. Often images were truncated or overlapped 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.

As mentioned previously, learners are expected to follow the formatting given in the text file when inserting text. For example, the title should be as given in the text file - capitalised without the 'Title:' label.

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 and/or 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
- saving a document with a meaningful file name which is relevant to the contents of the activity (Sponsor form) and not the test (Task 3).

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.

Several 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 for this task.

Examiners continue to find that email messages are not suitable in tone or content. Often the messages are not spell 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.

Another area which suggested that learners were not reading the paper carefully was in producing a message which were too vague in asking for general comments about the sponsor form rather than confirmation that Quinton was happy with the layout.

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. This is mentioned 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 their inbox, outbox and sent folders.

Some examiners have reported that learners at some centres do not appear to have access to an offline mail client and produce 'emails' in word processing software. Since these do not provide suitable evidence of attachments or ability to use email, centres which 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 complete and readable.

Task 5 - Using ICT

Task 5 explores some of the more theoretical aspects of functionality in using ICT.

In this series, learners were asked to answer questions about dealing with problems of sound from a video and sending a large file without using email.

There were many learners who gained full marks in Task 5. Where learners lost marks, it was often because they had produced answers that were too vague, not appropriate or repetitive.

Areas for improvement and development:

- making appropriate checks to attempt to resolve sound issues
- understanding different ways of sending large files which are too big for email client software.

Pass mark for FST02 Set 19

Maximum mark	50
Pass mark	36
UMS mark	6

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