

Chief Examiner Report for Functional Skills ICT

Functional Skills in ICT at Level 1 – 600/0030/2

Functional Skills in ICT at Level 2 – 600/0139/2

August 2017

Level 1:

Skill Standard: Using ICT

In questions concerning wider ICT knowledge, learners attempt the questions but many show a limited knowledge, although security issues produce reasonable responses. Learners struggle with data types, and many learners do not appear to understand what this means in the context of spreadsheet data.

Skill Standard: Finding and selecting information

Learners often perform very basic internet searches, but should demonstrate that they know how to complete a more exact search with multiple keywords.

Learners must review the content to ensure that it is relevant. When an internet search is required, learners are expected to save information such as website addresses and search keywords; this is requested in the task instructions, so learners need to follow the instructions carefully.

There are occasionally learners who fail to evidence their internet search, either as a saved file or with an email. This is likely to be due to the learner not following the instructions carefully.

Skill Standard: Developing, presenting and communicating information

When working with a spreadsheet, some learners complete manual calculations rather than use spreadsheet functions. All calculations will require a formula and the use of cell references will always be required in developing the numerical data. When a mathematical method is required that may be less familiar to learners, the calculation method is explained in the task.

Many learners struggle to complete formula based calculations with anything other than a SUM formula. Learners often use cell references inefficiently in their formulae, for example using discrete cell references rather than specifying a range of cells.

Learners sometimes place formulae in the wrong place, or position it on the spreadsheet without suitable column headings, making the data difficult to identify. Learners should add titles to any calculated values to show what the information is.

Learners are usually capable of producing a chart in a spreadsheet, but learners often select all data for the chart, rather than a specified set of values. Learners often do not label their charts; a main title and axes titles are expected.

Learners make simple errors when resizing images. Distortion of an image is not acceptable, and learners often lose marks for this. Marks are often lost due to poor use of space on the page. Learners should review their final document and consider whether it is fit for the stated purpose.

It is important that learners review the task before moving on to the next task, to ensure they have produced everything requested.

Level 2:

Skill Standard: Using ICT

Learners are often expected to demonstrate file management skills, for example by using folders. Learners often fail to save all files in a folder, and do not create appropriate folder structures with suitable names.

Skill Standard: Finding and selecting information

As with Level 1, learners must demonstrate the ability to refine an internet search, for example with multiple keywords. Learners must also follow instructions carefully and record all the requested information to evidence their search methods, such as website addresses and search terms. Full website addresses are often requested and learners sometimes provide an abbreviated address that would not work if re-entered in a browser.

Skill Standard: Developing, presenting and communicating information

Learners should always be aware that in a spreadsheet, cell references must always be used. Learners are using more complex formulae, such as the IF function and percentage calculations. However, learners often complete calculations using incorrect data. The use of absolute cell references or defined names in formulae is a problem for many learners. Using a feature such as absolute references would allow learners to complete tasks more efficiently and save them time. Learners should add titles to any calculated values to show what the information is.

In producing charts in a spreadsheet application, learners often show difficulties in selecting specific series of data for charts, and in titling charts appropriately. Learners may also be expected to include data labels in their charts.

Learners often do not make use of text formatting to make information stand out. Learners are often not presenting information with an appropriate structure; experience of different types of document would be helpful to learners, to allow them to judge what layout would be appropriate. Learners can benefit from knowing how to use features such as sub-headings, image captions and text boxes.

In questions that require a demonstration of wider knowledge, learners continue to struggle with explaining the different types of data formats that can be used and what features make a database application useful. Learners generally fail to show a good understanding of the business and workplace uses of ICT in communication and confuse such uses with their own experience of communication tools such as social media applications.

Generic Overview:

Learners are expected to use folders to organise their work, and saved files should be in an appropriate folder. Learners should develop an awareness of the importance of file management.

In improving learners' wider knowledge of ICT issues, learners could make use of topical events that relate to security issues.

Learners need an awareness of how online communication can benefit business and the workplace user, rather than only knowing about social media. The meaning and significance of data types is important to the correct function and presentation of some applications, and learners need to be aware of this.

In spreadsheet work, learners need to demonstrate the use of suitable and efficient formulae and formatting, in working with charts, learners will need to chart specified data and apply labels. Correct titling of a chart, to make its meaning clear, is important and a review of their work should allow learners to identify any omissions.

Learners are likely to perform better if they review their work before leaving the assessment room, and check that they have completed all parts of each task.

Overcoming an area:

In spreadsheet work, learners need to demonstrate a range of skills. This will include using a range of formula types to calculate, using data types in their formatting, and formatting row and column sizes. Learners must always use cell ranges in formulae, for example B2:B6 rather than a series of discrete cell references, and must always use cell references rather than numerical values in calculations. At Level 2, learners should be able to use absolute cell references and formulae such as IF. In working with charts, learners need to improve their ability to chart specified data and to label it correctly, including data value labels.

If learners are asked to manage contact details, then they must enter information accurately and provide all the information requested. Frequent omissions are evidenced in this work, and this is most likely due to the instructions not being followed accurately.

In document development using word-processing, formatting and presentational features, learners need to review their final piece of work and make sure it is fit for purpose. Learners must understand the difference between a poster, report, presentation etc. and make appropriate software and formatting choices.

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