

## 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**

**February 2016**

### **Level 1:**

A common and significant cause of the loss of marks by learners is the omission of parts of tasks or of entire activities. There are examples where there is no evidence of a task being completed, for example internet search evidence is not saved or folder management is not used. This can most likely be explained by the inconsistent following of instructions, and practise with sample papers before taking a live assessment will be a critical factor.

Learners' performance in spreadsheet tasks has improved over time, as centres and learners are engaging in better preparation for these tasks. Many learners are able to attempt the spreadsheet task, although skills in using formulae are varied and learners often fail to label and title charts appropriately.

The production of documents, such as a poster or flyer, is often completed reasonably well. However, learners would benefit from a final review of their document and consider whether it is fit for purpose. There are often examples of the poor use of font formatting, excessive white space, and where key information is not made to stand out.

In questions concerning wider ICT knowledge, many learners continue to provide incomplete or incorrect answers. The nature of many responses suggests a limited knowledge of the wider issues relating to ICT security, but the issue could be explained by learners not taking sufficient time to consider their final response.

### **Level 2:**

Although learners at Level 2 perform well with email and internet activities, there are still occasionally errors in providing evidence. For example, in completing full details in a contact details form within an email application or showing full records of internet searches.

Many learners are producing some good work in their spreadsheet-based activities. A challenge with such tasks is often in understanding the approach required, as the activities are intended to be of a problem-solving nature. All attempts are marked and awarded marks to credit any correct work, so it is worth a learner attempting to do what they can. Common difficulties are still

with using formulae efficiently, for example with a correct cell range and absolute cell references where appropriate. Some learners will use 'SUM' in any type of calculation, indicating some misunderstanding of how the formula works. There are occasions where the use of more complex formulae such as the IF function would be appropriate and make the task much less onerous and would save the learner valuable time, but such a function appears to be seen as very challenging for learners. Without the use of features such as absolute cell references of IF, learners are having to spend much more time on the activity than was intended. Learners often show difficulties in selecting specific series of data for charts, and in titling charts appropriately. Learners must check their completed charts carefully and consider if they meet the required purpose.

At this level, learners generally perform well in the production of word-processed documents. However, even at this level they often would benefit from a final review of their document and consider whether it is fit for purpose. Documents often contain inappropriate space, formatting that is not suitable for the intended purpose of the document and key information that is not formatted appropriately.

In questions that require a demonstration of wider knowledge, learners are often not confident in the different types of data that can be used and how applications such as a database can be used to manipulate data. The specification requires knowledge of databases and some understanding of the main features of such applications is required. Learners also often fail to show good understanding of the business and workplace uses of ICT in communication as opposed to, for example, the use of social media for communication.

## Generic Overview:

The majority of assessments taking place are now in the online format, and this is being well received by centres and learners. The clear benefits are the removal of the need to collate printed evidence, but also that the evidence is much more accessible and easier to award marks. There are occasionally examples of missing evidence or incomplete tasks. This could well be the result of a lack of practice with the online format and learners not being familiar with the environment and methods of navigation.

At both Level 1 and 2, learners must take care to follow the instructions carefully. The instruction may be on the question screen or page, or in the content of emails. It is important that learners take time to consider the instructions carefully and plan their work. The assessments are designed to allow sufficient time for this, and if learners have planned their work to provide only the required evidence then they should not be short of time. The use of emails to provide instructions is deliberate to create an activity that represents a holistic assessment of a learner's ICT skills within the simulation of real-life scenario. A consequence is that learners need to take extra care in following

the instructions, and they would benefit from some practice with such activities.

Learners must ensure that they record the results of internet searches carefully, including the search terms and website addresses used. A check against the task instructions before leaving the assessment room would be advisable to ensure they have produced all the evidence required for marking.

In producing spreadsheet charts, learners need to take more care in charting the correct data, and labelling of the data and axes. Learners often chart incorrect data, or chart all the data in the spreadsheet when they were asked to chart only certain values. Charts often have missing titles on the axes, and the main title can be unclear. These are issues that result in the loss of a number of marks, so learners need the skill of being able to recognise what constitutes a complete chart.

The assessments include a section that aims to assess wider knowledge and many learners at both levels are displaying limited knowledge of topics such as security issues and threats, the use of internet communication for work and business purposes, and the features of different applications such as databases that lend themselves to particular business uses.

Although learners taking the Level 2 assessment are showing better evidence of being prepared for the assessment, this is increasingly often not the case with Level 1. There are often examples where the learner is clearly struggling to understand the requirements and produce a reasonable response. The conclusion is that many learners are being entered when they are not ready, Greater use of the sample assessments to verify readiness, and also more taught preparation should be considered.

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