

## 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

October 2015

### Level 1

We have recently seen the arrival of more assessment papers, in both the online and paper-based format. The assessment papers have improved the clarity of instruction and represent a comprehensive assessment of skills at the level.

A significant number of learners have already taken the assessments and the tasks are proving to be effective. We have continued to see an improvement in the learners' performance in spreadsheet tasks, as centres and learners are engaging in more comprehensive preparation for these tasks, and the improved clarity in the assessment design has made the tasks more accessible.

There are however still some areas that are causing difficulties, but mostly due to learners not following instructions. These include tasks such as internet searches, where many learners are likely to be quite capable, but they are losing marks due to the instructions not being followed in full.

Where spreadsheet tasks involve the production of a chart, learners often fail to include appropriate titles for their chart, and without this information the chart is of little value. In questions concerning wider ICT knowledge, learners are frequently providing partial answers or misunderstanding the question.

## Level 2

When learners are asked to complete tasks in emails applications, although they are at least partially completing all the elements of the task, mistakes are being made in the finer points of their work. For example, learners are not creating complete and appropriate email messages, or not completing all details of a contact entry. The errors being made are often indicative of a hurried approach and a lack of a review of the completed task before moving on to the next question.

With the majority of assessments now being online, learners are showing better performance in their spreadsheet work and they have shown difficulty with this application in particular in the past. However, some learners are still having difficulty with the use of efficient formulae, for example the use of a cell reference range rather than specifying a series of discrete cell references within a formula. Many learners fail to make use of absolute cell references to reduce the amount of repetitive entry of formulae.

Although learners are generally capable of producing charts, there are issues with the selection of specific data series or non-adjacent data, and in titling charts appropriately; learners must check their completed charts carefully, and consider if they meet the required purpose.

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

Learners should be reminded frequently that all instructions in the assessment must be followed carefully and all parts of each task should be attempted. Learners are often losing marks for not completing components of the assessment tasks, yet the evidence suggests this is more an issue of the learner's exam technique and the ability to follow instructions rather than their ICT skills. The issue is often evident in internet searches at both levels and in the use of email application features at Level 2.

At both Level 1 and 2, the spreadsheet tasks are being completed with improving confidence by learners. However, any requirements for a chart are still causing some challenges. Many learners would benefit from more practice in developing charts, particular the selection of an appropriate chart type for the purpose, the selection of data series, and the appropriate titling and labelling of charts. Learners are generally able to produce charts, but often with errors in these features.

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.

Overall, at both levels, the online assessment model, with new assessment papers, is working well and learners are responding well to the activities presented to them. Learners are generally following the instructions in the assessment and coping well with the navigation through the various activities. It is however evident in a number of Level 2 assessments that the learner is significantly misinterpreting the tasks and it is likely in such cases that the learner is not yet operating at that level. Centres should consider carefully if learners are ready for Level 2 and make use of the sample assessments at Level 1 and then Level 2 before making a live test entry.

Name: David Foster

Date: October 2015