

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 2015

Level 1:

The assessments include both online and paper-based assessments, although the recent introduction of a new online assessment system has resulted in the majority of assessments being taken online. Learners are generally performing reasonably well in the new assessments, demonstrating that they have been adequately prepared for the assessment. There are however some learners who are not evidencing their work fully. In some cases, it is a problem of instructions not being followed in full, and learners must take care when using the online system and that all the instructions in the first section are followed carefully; some learners are losing marks simply because they haven't fully evidenced their work with saved files. In the paper-based assessments, it is the learner's responsibility to ensure full website addresses are visible when screenshots are used, and on occasions these are too small to be read clearly.

Documents are mostly produced to a good standard and this is not an area that many learners find difficulty with. However, learners should remember to check their work for 'fitness for purpose', as there are cases where the outcomes show poor use of space and confusing layouts. Learners should be encouraged to look at their finished product and reflect on whether it is fully suitable for the intended purpose.

Spreadsheet activities still prove a challenge for some. For online assessments, the use of cell references and formulae is marked on-screen. For paper-based assessments, there is a requirement for learners to produce evidence of any formulae used, and this is not always provided. Although learners are generally showing reasonable spreadsheet skills, there are still some who do not make use of cell ranges to create efficient formulae. Some learners clearly struggle with the request to complete calculations and do not make a reasonable attempt at the work; centres should note that if learners are not able to attempt the spreadsheet task, then they are not to be expected to achieve the qualification. Learners also struggle with charts, and in particular correct titling of the chart.

Assessments may include questions that require wider subject knowledge, and learners must take care to answer these to the best of their ability. The full range of the Standards may also be covered with reference to applications such as databases and learners must be aware of the key features of such applications.

Level 2:

The assessments include both online and paper-based assessments. In the online assessments, the learner must use an email application to perform various tasks. The task instructions may be presented as part of the question or within an email, and some learners are losing marks due to the task instructions not being followed in full, so some care is required to follow all instructions.

In spreadsheets, there are still common errors in the use of cell references to create an efficient formula, and learners at this level should expect to use absolute cell references. It may be expected that learners will produce charts from discrete or multiple sets of data, or to display values such as percentages. The presentation of charts is often inconsistent with missing titling and labels.

Assessments may require learners to demonstrate wider subject knowledge in written responses, and learners should be encouraged to take care in answering the question as fully as they are able to. Responses often provide only a partial answer, so learners will find it worthwhile to reflect on their response and consider whether it answers the question in full. The questions could include topics such as database applications, security and data protection issues as well as a potentially wide range of other topics. Databases in particular are a topic on which learners often demonstrate poor knowledge, and although practical expertise is not expected, some understanding of the principles of a database and its basic functionality and terminology is expected.

Generic Overview:

Learners must take care to follow the task instructions carefully. There are many examples where this is not the case, and learners are losing significant numbers of marks due to simple errors, misunderstandings and omissions.

With spreadsheet applications, tutors should consider whether their students are fluent in using formulae with cell ranges, producing charts including at level 2 with data that is non-adjacent in a table, and that charts can be fully titled.

Learners must be prepared in all areas of the standards, including the 'coverage and range' criteria. All areas could be assessed, either by a practical task or by questions that require a written response. Therefore, in order to benefit from the most opportunities to gain marks, learners must have a wide knowledge of the subject as covered by the Standards, including security issues and the use of applications such as databases.

Learners should take care to provide full responses and check their work at the end of the assessment. Even partial responses may gain some marks so learners must not miss out activities.

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