Chief Examiner Report for Functional Skills ICT

NCFE Functional Skills Qualification in ICT at Level 1 – 600/0030/2
NCFE Functional Skills Qualification in ICT at Level 2 – 600/0139/2

August 2018

Level 1

Skill Standard: Using ICT

Learners often show misunderstanding of data types, and many learners do not understand what this means in the context of spreadsheet data.

In questions concerning wider ICT knowledge, learners often respond by suggesting they would contact the IT Help Desk, or similar. This response does not achieve marks, as it does not show any understanding, and learners must demonstrate how they would remedy the issue themselves.

Skill Standard: Finding and selecting information

Learners often perform very basic internet searches, but should demonstrate that they know how to complete a more refined search with multiple keywords. When an internet search is required, learners are expected to save information such as website addresses and search keywords and may be expected to provide this evidence in an email, but some learners omit this part of the activity.

Skill Standard: Developing, presenting and communicating information

Learners should be reminded to check they have completed all parts of the task, as some learners are not completing an email task. This may be used to provide evidence of any internet searches, so it is important for the task to be completed. Learners should produce a message that is appropriate for the context, including the use of an appropriate structure for the email with a closure such as their name. Issues of spelling and grammar will not be assessed.

When working with a spreadsheet, some learners complete calculations without using formulae or cell references, and this will not earn any marks. Learners should expect that all calculations will require a formula and the use of cell references will always be required in developing the numerical data.

Learners are usually capable of producing a chart in a spreadsheet, but learners often do not label their charts; a main title and axes titles are expected.

When working with documents, marks are often lost due to poor use of space on the page and because formatting instructions are not followed in full. Learners should review their final document and consider whether it is fit for the stated purpose and that all parts of the task have been completed.

Level 2

Skill Standard: Using ICT

As with Level 1, learners often respond to questions regarding error messages and common ICT problems by suggesting they would contact the IT Help Desk, or similar. This response does not achieve marks, as it does not show any understanding, and learners must demonstrate how they would remedy the issue themselves.

Skill Standard: Finding and selecting information

As with Level 1, learners must follow instructions carefully and record all the requested information to evidence their internet search methods. 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

At Level 2, learners should be able to identify when absolute cell references would be appropriate, or when a formula function such as IF would allow for efficient processing of the data. Many learners complete the spreadsheet activity with relative cell references only, which does not always allow for efficient operations such as formula replication in a column or row. Learners should demonstrate effective and efficient methods of processing. It may also be required that formulae cater for automatic recalculation of the data if base values change.

In producing charts in a spreadsheet application, learners often show difficulties in selecting specific and separate series of data. Learners may also be expected to include data labels. Learners often do not show full titles and labels for their chart, and this should always include a main title as well as axes titles for a bar chart.

In developing documents, the use of tables may also be expected at this level and learners should show their ability to format tables, with features such as borders, shading or merging of cells.

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.

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.

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. This should include the use of appropriate formulae structures that allow for efficient formula replication across rows and columns, to demonstrate efficient working. When 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

When completing an internet search, learners must check the activity instructions and make sure they have included all the required information and provided this evidence in the appropriate form. This may include the use of an email, so it is important that learners check they have completed all parts of the task.

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 functions 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 when requested and axes titles.

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 should understand how to make effective use of the space available, including using text and image formatting. Where tables are used, for example at Level 2, these must be formatted to make the contents clear, with the use of borders, shading and possibly features such as cell merging used for good effect. Learners must understand the difference between a poster, report, presentation etc. and make appropriate software and formatting choices.

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