

Principal Examiner Feedback

March 2012

Functional Skills ICT (FST01)
Level 1

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Introduction

This was the eighth series of examinations for this specification. The paper was written to closely match the layout and the degree of difficulty of the previous series. It was clear that some centres had worked hard to prepare their candidates for the exam as almost all their candidates gained a good mark. Improved spreadsheet skills including the ability to produce a functional graph allowed these candidates to gain high marks for Question 2. Unfortunately, as in previous series, there are still centres that entered candidates who lacked the knowledge to access the higher marks and some candidates did not provide evidence for all the questions.

It was a requirement that candidates had no further access to the internet or internet technologies after the first 15 minutes and in this series there were few instances where this was not adhered to. Some centres stated that candidates could not provide evidence showing a document being set as read only, centres are strongly advised to read the Instructions for the Conduct of the Examination (ICE) document, which can be downloaded from www.edexcel.com/fsict. This document should be read by the Examinations Officer, the ICT faculty staff and the network technicians, since it contains a wealth of guidance and information to enable them to deliver this examination successfully.

Centres should make sure that candidates' work is collated correctly before it is submitted to the examiner as many candidates did not hole punch the printouts correctly, some pages were upside down or back to front and they were frequently not in task number order or attached to the cover sheet. Also candidates' work should not be inserted into plastic pockets.

Candidates are prompted at the beginning and throughout the examination to enter their name, candidate number and centre details before printing, yet some scripts showed handwritten details added after printing. This practice should be discouraged and candidates prepared properly for the examination so that they know how to add the relevant details in the header or footer of a document as required.

There were five tasks to be completed by candidates; the background to which was The Starring Role competition.

Task 1

In Task 1 candidates were asked to search the internet for the address including the postcode of the London Palladium. This task was generally well done and most candidates gained either three or four marks for the task although a small number failed to copy a full or relevant web address, this was generally when candidates included the ULR for Google rather than the relevant site. Candidates need to be reminded that Google is a search engine and is therefore not appropriate when requested to enter the website address of the source of the information required in the test.

Several candidates either failed to produce a valid screen-shot or included a screenshot of a webpage related to the London Palladium itself or of the web page where they found the postal address. Almost all candidates recorded a valid postal address for the Palladium. It was clear that a small number of candidates had used a search engine and they achieved the second two marks but they had not provided the required screenshot to attain all of the first two marks.

Areas for improvement and development:

- understanding the need for a screen shot of search criteria
- producing screen shots in which the critical information is easy to read
- copying website addresses accurately and completely

Task 2

In task 2, candidates were presented with a spreadsheet which contained figures for cities where the Starring Role Auditions would be held. Candidates were asked to enter data for one city and format the spread sheet to make it clearer and easier to understand. They were also asked to calculate the total attending auditions at each city, sort the spreadsheet alphabetically by city and to produce a chart to display the numbers attending sessions in each city.

Almost all candidates entered the correct data into the spreadsheet. Most candidates used a workable formula to calculate the total and replicated it correctly. However a minority of candidates still failed to produce a formula printout. The majority of candidates sorted the city column alphabetically but a significant number failed to keep the correct data with the city.

A significant number of candidates failed to apply any formatting techniques at all and, therefore, failed to gain any marks at all in this section. The majority of candidates made the title and column headings bold or underscored, however only a few applied suitable shading, gridlines or centred the title.

Most candidates produced the expected bar/column chart from the required data range although a significant number included the total column which was not required. A small number of candidates produced pie or line charts which were not appropriate for the task. As in previous series, axis labels were frequently missing and titles were generally not well done. Candidates should be encouraged to use the wording of the question to guide them to add a suitable title and axis labels.

Areas for improvement and development:

- adding appropriate borders and shading
- using font enhancements to improve layout of spreadsheets
- appropriate use of the =SUM function
- replication
- sorting data in a spreadsheet
- selecting appropriate graph types
- selecting data for graphs
- adding titles and axis labels to graphs
- printing data from a spreadsheet
- printing the formulae view of a spread sheet
- printing a graph using appropriate size and proportions, on a separate sheet.

Task 3

This task required candidates to produce an A4 advertisement for Starring Role auditions. They were then asked to make document read only.

There is still a general lack of understanding about the purpose of different types of document and how these meet the needs of a task and are made fit for purpose. Consequently, many candidates created a poster rather than an advertisement and many used the term 'poster' in the file name.

Almost all candidates inserted the logo, with the vast majority placing it at or near the top of the page. However, a significant number of candidates failed to copy the entire supplied text file and a small number invented their own text. In spite of feedback in all previous reports and guidance within the mark scheme regarding the use of Word Art, candidates continue to use this feature for their titles, thus losing marks. Candidates should be reminded that WordArt is rarely appropriate in business documents.

Most candidates selected the correct images, though some included more than the required two images and a sizable minority selected the skier or the tennis player which were not correct. Many candidates lost marks due to changing the image ratio on one or more of the images. Most candidates inserted the correct address, though about 25% did not put it in the position required and about 10% failed to remove the brackets and the remainder placed the address elsewhere (often at the top or the foot of the page). Only a small number candidates generated a document that was of sufficient overall quality to be fit for purpose as they had failed to make any key information stand out.

Many candidates failed to gain any marks for making the file 'read only'. Where they chose to convert the file to pdf they had clearly misunderstood the purpose of 'read only'.

Areas for improvement and development:

- copying text from a text file
- selecting appropriate images from an image bank
- maintaining image proportions
- using appropriate image sizes
- using appropriate font sizes and styles
- considering suitable layout of text and images
- checking a document for fitness for purpose
- accessing security features to make files read only.

Task 4

Candidates were asked to produce an email and to answer a question about copyright images. The majority of candidates successfully demonstrated the use of email software. Most candidates entered the correct e-mail address, but less than 25% included a suitable subject heading.

Candidates were required to include a message asking for feedback on the advertisement and, whilst not marked, most examiners reported that the level of literacy evidenced in the body of the messages was generally very poor. Nevertheless, the vast majority of candidates did make a direct reference to getting feedback within their message.

Candidates were asked what James must do before the advertisement was published as it contained images which were not copyright free. This task was generally very poorly answered and only a small number of candidates achieved both marks. Many candidates lost marks because they answered using wording from the question, for example "use copyright free images".

Areas for improvement and development:

- adding suitable subject lines
- attaching relevant documents to an email
- using a suitable business tone in the message
- use of copyright images in a document.

Task 5

Most candidates scored well on this task. However, a few candidates left the file name as Doc1.doc or Publication1.pub. Some candidates had apparently completed the task but the contents of the screenshot were not clear and so credit could not be given. Some of the folders seen indicated that centres were allowing candidates to access all their normal user areas. Centres are reminded that the candidates should be given no access to their normal desktop and directories during the test, but should be given specific exam accounts that are enabled only for the direction of that particular test session.

Areas for improvement and development:

- creating meaningful new folders
- moving files into folders
- using meaningful names for files
- producing screenshots which are readable.

Pass mark for FST01

Maximum mark	50
Pass mark	33
UMS mark	6

Note: Grade boundaries vary from year to year and from subject to subject, depending on the demands of the questions.

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