Principal Examiner Feedback

June 2012

Functional Skills ICT
Level 1 (FST01)

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Introduction

This 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 pie chart and to format a spreadsheet, 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. For example, Task 3 required candidates to insert a table into a flyer and it was clear from the number of flyers which did not include a table that this is an area of weakness for many candidates. Some candidates did not provide evidence for all the questions.

It was a requirement that candidates had no access to any files other than those necessary for the exam, it was clear from screen shots provided by some candidates that they had access to data files from previous papers and, in some cases, their own files. 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 opening of a new Get Fresh sandwich shop.

Task 1
In Task 1 candidates were asked to search the internet for the country of origin of minestrone soup. This task was generally well done and most candidates gained either 3 or 4 marks although a small number failed to copy a full or relevant web address, this was generally when candidates included the Google ULR. 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 Minestrone soup. Almost all candidates recorded the correct country of origin.

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 the number of sandwiches sold by the new shop in the first week. Candidates were asked to enter data for one sandwich and then calculate the total sales for the week for each sandwich. They were then asked to sort the spreadsheet in descending order by total sales for the week and format the spread sheet to make it clearer and easier to understand. Finally they were asked to produce a pie chart to display the totals sales for the week for each sandwich.

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. Some candidates did not attempt the sort and some sorted in ascending order. Those candidates that did sort generally sorted all the data correctly.

A significant number of candidates lost marks because they failed to apply any formatting techniques and some left columns truncated. The majority of candidates who did apply formatting made the title and column headings bold or underscored, only a few applied suitable shading or centred the title. Some candidates applied gridlines but most just applied them to the whole spreadsheet rather than being selective.

Most candidates produced the specified pie chart from the required data range. A small number of candidates produced a bar or line chart. Most candidates printed the chart in black and white and it was not always easy to distinguish the individual segments of the chart as they were similar shades of grey. The majority of candidates did not label the segments although the most included a correct legend.

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
- printing the formulae view of a spread sheet
- selecting data for graphs
- adding data labels to pie charts
- printing data from a spreadsheet
- adding formatting to pie charts so that segments are clearly distinguishable
- printing a chart using appropriate size and proportions, on a separate sheet.

Task 3

This task required candidates to produce an A4 flyer for the new Get Fresh shop. 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 a flyer and many used the term 'poster' in the file name.

Most candidates produced a flyer which included the correct text but some deleted required text because it was in brackets although they were not instructed to do so in the text file. Only a limited number inserted a table in the correct position as shown by the plan in the exam paper. 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.

Most candidates selected the correct images, though some included more than the required three images and a sizable minority selected the ice cream which was not correct. Many candidates lost marks due to changing the image ratio on one or more of the images and a considerable number did not position the image near the relevant text. Most candidates removed the brackets as instructed and inserted the correct information from task 1.

Only a small number of candidates generated a document that was of sufficient overall quality to be fit for purpose.

Many candidates failed to gain any marks for making the file read only.

Areas for improvement and development:
- copying text from a text file
- creating and formatting tables
- 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 to the Manager of Get Fresh. The majority of candidates successfully demonstrated the use of email software. Most candidates entered the correct e-mail address and subject heading.

Candidates were required to include a message asking for feedback on the flyer and the vast majority of candidates did this, however the majority of candidates lost marks by using inappropriate salutations or 'text speak' in a business email. Almost all candidates successfully attached the correct file to the email.

Areas for improvement and development:
- adding suitable subject lines
- using a suitable business tone in the message.

Task 5
Most candidates scored well on this task. However, a few candidates left a 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
- Giving meaningful names to files
- producing screenshots which are readable.

Pass mark for FST01

Maximum mark	50
Pass mark	32
UMS	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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