

Examiners' Report

June 2014

Pearson Edexcel Functional Skills
ICT Level 2 (FST02)

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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, unfortunately, as in previous series, there are still centres that entered candidates who lacked the knowledge to access the higher marks. For example, a significant proportion of candidates could not write a correct IF statement which met the requirements of Task 2b and many did not attempt to filter the table in Task 2d.

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.

Centres should remind candidates to check that screenshots provided for Tasks 1 and 5 are of a sufficient size so that the information can be easily read.

There were five tasks to be completed by candidates; the background to which included finding information and producing a newsletter for the owner of a chain of hairdressing salons.

Task 1: Internet Research

In Task 1, candidates were asked to search the internet to find an image of The Shard and the name of the hotel in the Shard including the number of floors it occupies. This task was generally well done and most candidates gained either 5 or 6 marks although a small number failed to copy a full or relevant web address. This was generally when candidates included the URL for the search engine Google and not the actual website source. 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.

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: Spreadsheet

In Task 2, candidates were presented with a spreadsheet which contained data for the income for stylists over a three month period. Candidates were asked to calculate the total income for each stylist they were then asked to use a spreadsheet function to calculate the bonus for each stylist using the table of data provided. Candidates were asked to format the spreadsheet to make it clearer and easier to read, filter the spreadsheet in descending order by income for the stylists working at the Kingston salon and identify the stylist with the highest income. Finally, they were asked to produce a chart to display the income for each stylist in the filtered list.

Most candidates used a workable formula to calculate the total income and replicated it correctly; however, many candidates were unable to use a correct IF statement to calculate the bonus with the most common errors being the use of ">" rather than ">=" and not including absolute cell references where required. Some candidates did not attempt to use a formula and simply entered the bonus manually.

Not all candidates attempted the filter and some sorted in ascending order. Most correctly identified the stylist with the highest income. Those candidates that did apply a filter generally sorted all the data correctly and identified the correct stylist.

A small 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 acceptable improvements to the spreadsheet.

Most candidates produced the specified chart from the required data range although a significant number produced a chart which included all the stylists. The charts produced were generally fit for purpose but there are still a number of candidates who do not include a suitable title or correct axis labels.

Areas for improvement and development (not all these were assessed on this occasion):

- formatting a spreadsheet
 - currency
 - decimal places
 - appropriate borders and shading
 - word wrapping
 - appropriate row heights and column widths
 - use of text formatting to enhance visual clarity e.g. bold, italics, font size
- using formulae
 - simple formulae using arithmetic symbols (+, -, / and *)
 - using functions e.g. SUM, IF, MAX, MIN and VLOOKUP where appropriate
 - using efficient formulae (eg using SUM for adding up a range of cells)
 - using absolute and relative cell references

- sorting and filtering
 - on one column
 - on multiple columns (secondary sorting or sorting within a sort)
 - expanding selection to include full table in a sort
 - using appropriate filters to show selected data from a table
- charts
 - pie charts, line graphs and column or bar charts with one or more series of data
 - understanding the appropriateness of different chart types
 - inserting a suitable title on the chart
 - using legends where appropriate
 - axis labels where relevant
- printing
 - printing in data view
 - printing in formula view
 - ensuring that cell contents are not truncated in printouts
 - adding footers with candidate details
 - fitting a spreadsheet to one page
 - making sure that colour schemes used are still readable when printed in monochrome.

Task 3: Presentation of information

This task required candidates to produce an A4 newsletter, formatted in columns, from the owner of the salons, Nathan Lane. This task was generally well done with most candidates producing a newsletter which included the correct text and which was formatted correctly in columns.

Almost all candidates selected the correct images including the image they found in Task 1a. Most candidates removed the brackets as instructed and inserted the correct information from Task 1b.

Candidates should be encouraged to check the document in print preview prior to printing to check that it fits to one page and that the layout is appropriate for the required purpose of the document.

Areas for improvement and development:

- selection of appropriate software for producing an on-screen or paper-based presentation of information
- integration of information from a variety of sources including text, images, tables and graphs
- consideration of suitability in selection of text/images for an audience and purpose
- use of formatting techniques appropriately:
 - text enhancements – bold, italic, underline, font sizes
 - selection of font styles
 - selection of suitable font sizes for a document
 - hyphenation
 - text wrap and alignment
 - checking for consistency in font sizes and styles
- checking the printout for truncation of text and/or images
- checking that all the criteria stated in the question paper have been met
- consideration of fitness for purpose
- consideration of audience.

Task 4: Communication: preparing an email

Candidates were asked to produce an email to Nathan with a copy of the newsletter attached. 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 if Nathan wanted to add any additional information and the majority of candidates did this, however a significant proportion of candidates lost marks by using inappropriate salutations such as 'Hi' or 'Hey' or 'text speak' in a business email. Almost all candidates successfully attached the correct file to the email.

As mentioned previously, some examiners report that there are still several centres where there is evidence that candidates are accessing the internet during this task and using online accounts – often these are the candidates' personal accounts. This is unacceptable and a breach of the code of practice for this examination. Examiners also noted that some candidates seemed to be using an existing account with several (often personal) contacts already in the address book and messages in the inbox/outbox/sent boxes.

Some examiners have reported that candidates at some centres do not appear to have access to an offline mail client and produce 'emails' in word processing software. Since these do not provide suitable evidence of attachments or ability to use email, centres which do not provide the candidates with offline email clients are penalising their candidates unnecessarily.

There are many ways of producing the evidence using offline account systems – for example the setting up of Outlook or Outlook Express accounts as part of the examination account used by the candidate. Centres are reminded that the accounts set up for the test should be cleared of previous contents. Further guidance is available on the Frequently Asked Questions section of the Edexcel Functional Skills website.

Areas for improvement and development:

- selection of appropriate offline email client software
- careful copying of text from the question paper
- accurate copying of email addresses
- attachment of correct files to an email
- using a suitable subject line for an email
- using appropriate language for business email messages
- ensuring that screen shot evidence is readable.

Task 5: Using ICT

For Task 5a candidates were asked to state an action that could be taken if an email, with an attachment, arrives from an unknown sender. They were also asked to state a reason why the action could be taken. This task was generally well answered and most candidates were aware of the dangers of such emails and gave valid answers; however, some candidates suggested not opening the email rather than the attachment.

Task 5b asked for two actions Nathan could take so that he did not break the law if he used an image found on the internet. Candidates were clearly familiar with the copyright regulations and this task was generally well done.

Areas for improvement and development:

- awareness of how viruses can be transmitted via email attachments
- actions to take to minimise the risks associated with such emails and attachments.

Pass Marks

Pass marks for this, and all other papers, can be found on the website on this link:

<http://www.edexcel.com/iwantto/Pages/grade-boundaries.aspx>

