

# Examiners' Report

## Set 02

### Pearson Edexcel Functional Skills ICT Level 1 (ICT01)

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## Introduction

This series was the second release of on-demand tests. The on-demand tests are designed to be of the same standard as the paper based series held during scheduled examination windows. The main variations between the tests result from the differences between printed and digital responses.

Many of the issues noted in the paper based series have been evident in responses during this Set 02 on-demand release. Reports from examiners indicate that there continues to be a number of centres where it appears that candidates have been poorly prepared for the test. A pass in the test is intended to be approximately equivalent to the Grade D standard in GCSE. Responses from candidates in this examination did not always reflect this standard.

It is a requirement of this test that candidates should have access to the internet **only** during the first 15 minutes of the test. A number of centres appear to be unaware of this stipulation and facilities for offline email are not made available to candidates for the purpose of this test. There are some centres where the use of students' personal email accounts (e.g. Hotmail, Yahoo mail etc.) is evident. Centres need to ensure that candidates are aware that there could be serious consequences if they are found to be breaching the code of conduct. There is also evidence from pupil responses that centres are not setting up new accounts for each series, that data files from previous series are available and that items in email clients are not cleared before the start of the examination.

Centres are also reminded that it is a requirement that separate user areas, not accessible to candidates outside their sitting of the test, should be prepared. Some screenshots produced during the test showed that a small number of candidates used their normal desktop and documents folders. It is also important that data files should be copied into each candidate's user area before the start of the examination.

It has also been noted by examiners that some centres are not printing out copies of the question paper before the examination. They are, instead, providing candidates with electronic copies of the question papers. This is not appropriate when the security of the examination is critical. It is the responsibility of the centre staff to maintain the integrity of the question paper before, during and after the test. The risk of a security breach is greater if candidates are permitted access to electronic copies of the question paper during the time they are allowed internet access in the test itself.

Centres must provide the appropriate facilities for candidates to complete all tasks within the specification. The guidelines for setting up the user accounts for the test are clearly laid out in the Information for the Conduct of the Examination issued for each series. Further guidance on email and internet access is available from Pearson Edexcel if required.

There were, as usual, five tasks to be completed during the test. These were based on a fictitious zoo called Wild Haven.

## **Task 1 – Internet Research**

This task was generally well completed by candidates. In this series, candidates were asked to use the internet to find the scientific name of a lion.

Candidates generally succeeded in using a search engine to find the correct answer. Where candidates lost marks it was often for submitting a print out of the search results rather than the required screen shot of the search engine page showing the criteria entered. Many candidates submitted screen shots that were unreadable.

### Areas for improvement and development:

- understanding the term “search engine”
- understanding the term “search criteria”
- producing screenshots that are legible and where the information can be read
- copying website addresses, not those of the search engine used, accurately and completely
- understanding the importance of reliability in relation to website information
- acknowledging appropriate sources of information.

## **Task 2 – Spreadsheet**

In the spreadsheet task, candidates were required to calculate the sales of animal adoption packages and the total income. In total, the task consisted of five parts. Candidates completing the on demand test benefitted from not being required to produce a separate formula view since examiners were able to open the spreadsheet and access incorporated formulae.

In part (a) the candidates were informed that one of the values on the spreadsheet provided was incorrect and had to be amended. Fifty (50) had been entered on to the given spreadsheet as the price of the gold adoption package; candidates were required to amend this to 55. A surprising number of candidates were unable to gain the mark for this task as they either ignored the task altogether or entered 55 in an incorrect cell/location.

In part (b) the candidates were asked to calculate the total sales for each (adoption) package using a formula and were expected to use =SUM function. Surprisingly, many candidates were unable to gain the mark for this task either because they did not use a function at all or used the =SUM function inappropriately. It also appeared that many candidates entered the formula three times, often slightly differently, rather than using the replication feature.

In part (c) candidates were asked to calculate the total income from sales for each package. The candidates were expected to multiply the value calculated in (b) by the package price provided to complete this part of the task. Despite identifying the correct data, many candidates lost marks because they added rather than multiplied the two values. Although not penalised on this occasion, large numbers of candidates utilised =SUM

inefficiently within the multiplication. Again, there were instances of candidates entering the formula three times, often slightly differently, rather than using the replication feature.

In part (d) candidates were asked to format the spreadsheet to make it clear and easy to understand. There were specific instructions to format two rows - the package prices and total income from sales - to currency. Although many candidates scored well on this task, frequently marks were lost because all values in the spreadsheet were formatted to currency. However, formatting features were often used randomly and with little apparent thought to clarity and understanding, e.g. inconsistent, superfluous borders or shading effects.

In part (e) candidates were asked to create a chart using the adoption sales figures for each animal and each package, a total of 24 data values. Whilst many candidates were able to produce the appropriate chart, large numbers selected incorrect data - the total was frequently included and often the entire spreadsheet was used. Irrespective of the data selected, many candidates lost marks due to the omission of axis labels and titles; prompts for these are always provided in the question paper at Level 1.

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

- using formulae
  - simple formulae using arithmetic symbols (+, -, / and \*)
  - using functions e.g. SUM, AVERAGE, MAX, MIN where appropriate
  - using efficient formulae (e.g. correctly using the SUM function only for adding up a range of cells)
- formatting a spreadsheet
  - currency
  - decimal places
  - appropriate borders and shading
  - use of text formatting to enhance visual clarity e.g. bold, italics, font size
- charts
  - pie charts, column or bar charts with one or more series of data
  - correct selection of data
  - the appropriateness of different chart types
  - inserting a suitable title on the chart
  - using legends where appropriate
  - adding relevant axis labels.

### **Task 3 – Presentation of information**

Task 3 brings together information from the internet research and sometimes a value from the spreadsheet task together with text and images from given data files to produce an integrated document aimed at a particular audience.

In Task 3a candidates were asked to produce an A4 fact sheet for the zoo using text and images selected from the data files together with the information from the research in Task 1. A plan of the expected layout of the document was provided. Many candidates lost marks because they did not check that they had met the requirements of the task by including the correct items. For example, in this test the text given discussed four specific animals – a meerkat, a lion, a chimpanzee and a cheetah. Labelled photographs of these animals were provided for candidates' use. However, many candidates included images of a giraffe and/or polar bear, neither of which related to the text file or the zoo itself. As mentioned, a plan showing the placement of various elements of the document was provided in the question paper. It was expected that the information about the animals and the corresponding photographs would be located adjacent to one another in the table. It was readily apparent that large numbers of candidates were not familiar or confident with the use of tables.

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

- selection of appropriate software for producing an on-screen or paper-based document or presentation
- production of documents on different page sizes and orientations
- integration of information from a variety of sources including text, images, spreadsheets and charts
- consideration of suitability in selection of images for an audience and purpose
- use of tables
- use of formatting techniques effectively:
  - text enhancements – bold, italic, underline, font sizes
  - selection of font styles
  - selection of suitable font sizes
  - hyphenation
  - text wrap and alignment
  - checking for consistency in font sizes and styles
- checking the document for truncation of text and/or images
- using software tools to check spelling and grammar
- checking that all the criteria stated in the question paper have been met
- consideration of fitness for purpose
- consideration of audience.

Often responses to task 3 and/or 5 need to be entered on the Responses document used in Task 1. In this series, task 3(b) required candidates to suggest two ways the fact sheet created in task 3(a) could be protected from accidental or intentional changes. Large numbers of candidates seemed unsure about such a 'theoretical' aspect of using ICT. The most

popular answer suggested was 'passwords'; this being incorrect in the context of the question.

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

- understanding ways of protecting a document from change
- devising passwords, recognising aspects of 'strong' passwords
- viruses and their prevention

#### **Task 4 – Communication: preparing an email**

Candidates were asked to prepare an email with a suitable subject, message and an attachment. The quality of work for this task, particularly in the copying of email addresses and the content of the message is often below the standard expected.

Innumerable candidates do not appear to check that email addresses are entered correctly. Since incorrectly addressed emails will not reach their intended recipient, this is a critical aspect of functionality.

Examiners continue to find that email messages are not suitable in tone or content. Often the messages are not spell checked or grammar checked and the tone is far from suitable for a formal message. For example, "Hi" and "Hey" are considered inappropriate ways to address business email messages to unknown contacts. Candidates are expected to use an appropriate greeting followed by an accurate, concise message which meets the criteria in the question paper.

Many examiners continue to comment on candidates who fail to gain marks because the screen shot evidence provided is not readable. Candidates are expected to check the quality of their work to ensure that examiners will be able to read the contents.

As mentioned above, examiners report that 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. Candidates who access online accounts may face disqualification for these breaches. 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, such candidates are unnecessarily disadvantaged.

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 Pearson 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 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**

In this series, candidates were required to create a new folder called Wild Haven and move the spreadsheet and fact sheet files into the new folder. Examiners reported innumerable instances of incorrect spelling and capitalisation of the name of the created folder and many examples of incorrect contents within that folder.

Areas for improvement and development:

- accurate copying of folder name, including capitalisation
- ensuring folder content matches question requirements.

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