

Examiners' Report

January 2017

Pearson Edexcel Functional Skills
ICT Level 1 (FST01)

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Introduction

The examinations for the functional skills specification are well established. This exam paper closely matched the content, layout and degree of difficulty of all previous papers, paper-based and online.

Despite past papers and Principal Examiner reports being in the public domain together with other Awarding Body support mechanisms available, large numbers of candidates seemed ill-prepared for the examination or did not have the necessary skills to access the tasks. Although there were a handful of high scoring candidates, the quality of work from the majority was very disappointing.

Some candidates seem to have problems understanding the instructions for collating their work. Scripts were submitted with holes incorrectly punched, upside down or incorrectly ordered. Centre based supervision and/or preparation may well alleviate such issues; this would certainly facilitate the marking process.

There were five tasks to be completed by candidates based on a fictional primary school and their intention to publish recipe cards. Innumerable candidates could have secured higher marks – and a resultant pass grade - by following and carrying out the specific instructions in the paper.

Task 1 – Internet research

Candidates were required to search the internet and find the weight range of a large sized egg in the United Kingdom. The information and the website from which it was retrieved were to be entered on the Responses document which was printed as part of the candidate's evidence. The weight range was required for use in Task 3.

The majority of candidates provided the requisite screen shot of a search engine in which appropriate key words were visible and recorded both the retrieved information and source used; thus securing all four marks available.

A few candidates presented a screen shot of the result of the search rather than the search engine/key words in which case full marks were not accessible. It was good to note the low number of candidates recording the search engine as the source at this window.

Areas for improvement and development:

- reading the task and instructions carefully
- providing the requisite evidence
- differentiating between a search engine and a web page.

Task 2 – Spreadsheet

A spreadsheet was provided for the candidates to use in task 2. The spreadsheet contained details of costs associated with the production of the recipe cards. The main requirements of the task were to enter values into specific cells; calculate using multiplication, addition and subtraction; format the spreadsheet and devise a chart to display the costs for each number of sets of recipe cards. Although some candidates scored well on this task, there were numerous examples of limited spreadsheet skills.

Most candidates entered the correct three values into the specific cells on the spreadsheet and thus secured all three marks for 2(a) but there were instances of totally misplaced content.

Tasks 2(b), 2(c) and 2(d) involved using formulae to generate values; with most the marks derived from the formula view of the spreadsheet. Large numbers of candidates failed to produce a formula view printout; therefore, they were seriously disadvantaged in terms of the number of marks they could access in these sections of the task.

Most of those candidates who did produce a formula printout evidenced all three formulae in some way or other. It is disappointing to note the regularity with which the unnecessary use of =SUM occurs. The simple formula '=B4*B5' is all that was required in 2(b) yet the inclusion of '=SUM(B4*B5)' was often seen. Some candidates used '=PRODUCT(B4,B)' for this very simple single cell multiplication.

The addition in 2(c) was a continuous range (B9:B13). In most cases, the correct function and syntax were used, but there were examples of '=B9+B10+B11+B12+B13'.

Task 2(d) required the subtraction of one cell value from another and a hint in the paper identified the values to be used (total income minus total cost). As with 2(b) the unnecessary inclusion of '=SUM' was frequently seen. Many candidates reversed the values and calculated total cost minus total income and, disappointingly, did not consider the validity of the negative value outcome.

Where a formula printout was included there was good evidence of replication although there were instances of formulae being truncated, particularly with the '= B9+B10+B11....' approach.

There was a specific instruction to format all the currency values to £ with two decimal places at 2e(i). Most candidates accessed this mark but some included the quantities of recipe cards in their formatting and others used £ without the decimal places. As in previous tests, a surprisingly large number of candidates ignored task 2(e)(ii) altogether, not removing the truncation or including any formatting whatsoever, thereby failing to secure the marks available.

Task 2(f) required candidates to create a chart from the given costs values. Whilst attempted by many, the resultant charts were poorly devised and usually incomplete. Overall, low marks were scored on this task.

Where charts were included most were column or bar charts. Selecting the correct data range appeared to be the problem for large numbers of candidates. Recognising the 'five costs for each number of sets' mentioned in the instruction from within the spreadsheet seemed outside the scope of many candidates. There were charts with single sets of values only; many included the totals and/or number of sets in their 'columns' and some presented a chart incorporating every single value from the spreadsheet.

Despite the wording of the task and clear indication of an appropriate title, frequently candidates omitted a title entirely whilst other titles were often ill conceived, incomplete or inappropriate. Many candidates failed to include one or both of the axis labels; legends were omitted or incorrect; titles and axis labels included spelling errors, capitalisation inconsistencies and superfluous content.

Areas for improvement and development:

- printing in formula view
- creating efficient formulae
- using correct syntax
- considering calculated values in context
- checking legibility and content of printouts
- using appropriate and effective formatting
- selecting specific data
- devising appropriate charts that are correctly labelled with titles and axis labels.

Task 3 – Presenting information

For task 3(a), candidates were asked to create a recipe card for the Anytime Fruit Cake. They were required to include the text from the data file AnytimeFruitL1, include the stated recipe card number, incorporate the school logo and two appropriate images from the ImagesJan17L1 folder and include the weight range of the large sized egg found in Task 1. Although there were some very good attempts at this task, in the main the requirements seemed far outside the scope and skill set of the candidates and very few candidates scored well on this task.

Few candidates omitted the task entirely. Most used the expected word processing or DTP software but there were a surprising number of cards created in presentation software. Most candidates could produce similar sized backs and fronts but often these were on two separate A4 sheets. Placing the back and front of the recipe card side by side on one A4 page landscape was either ignored, not understood or beyond the capabilities of many candidates.

Most candidates secured the marks for incorporating the logo, images, provided text as given and the information retrieved in Task A, but few included the provided recipe card number in the location indicated by the text. The logo was usually placed correctly on both front and back, but consideration of its size in relation to the images was frequently ignored. Appropriate choices of image were made by most candidates although there were examples of the fried breakfast being included in the middle of the candidate's fruit cake recipe.

The overall presentation of the recipe cards was disappointing. Few candidates formatted the title or used formatting features within their document. The sub-headings were not identified or enhanced consistently and there was frequently a mismatch in font sizes and styles between front and back. There were a handful of borders and some examples of centring seen but the obvious opportunities to include bullets or numbering on the ingredients or steps in the method were usually ignored.

Few candidates secured the fitness for purpose mark due, usually as a result of omitting content.

Areas for improvement and development:

- skills in accessing different page sizes, layouts and design
- following instructions in respect of incorporating provided and sourced material
- using consistent and effective formatting.

Task 3(b) Given 'add a digital signature' as an example, task 3(b) required candidates to identify two other ways of preventing unauthorised changes being made to the completed recipe card. Although omitted entirely by some and poorly answered by a few others, this task was answered well in the main, with mark as final, read only and password protect being the recurring answers.

Areas for improvement and development:

- knowledge of a range of security features in the context of protecting a document from unauthorised change.

Task 4 - Communication: preparing an email

Task 4(a) required candidates to email the school finance manager, Brian Thompson attaching their spreadsheet. The email address to be used was provided.

Most candidates appeared to have access to offline email software as expected. There were fewer instances of word processed documents being submitted as evidence for this task than in the past, but still examples of personal email accounts being used.

Most candidates scored reasonably well, but as always there were examples of misspellings in the address, inaccurate and incomplete subject lines and, in a few cases, the wrong attachment. Most candidates included both elements in their message and asking Brian to check that he was happy with the costs (for the recipe card). Some of the language and tone of the messages was totally inappropriate and out of context. There were omitted or superfluous salutations, use of Hi/Hey and examples of text speak.

Areas for improvement and development:

- copying the addressee details as given
- choosing and entering a suitable subject
- devising appropriate message
- using a business like language and tone in the message
- producing a screen shot of a sufficient size to enable it to be read.

Task 5 – Using ICT

Task 5 required candidates to create a new folder called **RCards 2017** and move their spreadsheet and recipe card into the new folder; providing a printout of the screen shot to show this had been done.

Many candidates secured both marks available although a surprisingly large number incorrectly capitalised 'RCards'.

Many of the screen shots were inappropriately sized and difficult to decipher.

Areas for improvement and development:

- reading the task and instructions carefully
- copying the folder name as given
- producing a screen shot of a sufficient size to enable it to be read.

Pass mark for FST01 in January 2017

Maximum mark	50
Pass mark	36
UMS mark	6

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