



# Functional Skills External Assessment Report

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Subject	ICT
Level	1 and 2
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This report provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers/lecturers in their preparation of candidates for future assessments. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding.

# Comments on candidate performance

## General comments

Generally candidates perform better in level 1 assessments than level 2. It appears that some candidates entered for level 2 are not sufficiently prepared and do not have the skills and knowledge to succeed at level 2. Centres should be familiar with the specifications for ICT level 2 and ensure that candidates are entered appropriately.

Markers have noted that at both level 1 and level 2, the candidates who achieve passes are those who are familiar with using ICT for different purposes, for all of the skill standards and across all of the coverage and range of the specification.

## Areas in which candidates performed well

- ◆ Most candidates are able to access the e-mail application and download the necessary files.
- ◆ Most candidates are able to successfully create folders and save files into them.
- ◆ Most candidates are able to download images as instructed and insert them into documents and format them as required.
- ◆ Questions related to underpinning knowledge in the use of ICT; health and safety and data protection are generally tackled successfully. It is clear that candidates understand the implications of these questions and respond well.
- ◆ Most candidates have good word processing skills and make good attempts at these tasks.

## Areas which candidates found demanding

- ◆ Candidates do not always appropriately name folders and files are not always saved into suitably named folders for ease of retrieval.
- ◆ Some candidates are not able to create appropriate charts from information in spreadsheets, and those who can often do not label the axes accurately or include units.
- ◆ While many candidates manage to complete tasks requiring word processing skills, some lose marks through poor formatting and failure to name files appropriately.
- ◆ Where candidates are required to reply to e-mails, they often miss easy marks by not including an appropriate message, subject title or greeting and close.

- ◆ For questions involving calculations, candidates often understand how to carry out addition, but have poor skills regarding use of formulas such as SUM, AVG etc. Many candidates complete the calculations manually and so miss some of the marks available.
- ◆ A large number of candidates have difficulty with tasks involving the use of databases. Many candidates miss these questions entirely and other candidates try to complete the database tasks using a word processed document. Most candidates can only open and save the database file but do not appear to know how to create a query or a report.

## **Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates**

### **Level 1 and 2**

Candidates need more practice at creating meaningful file structures and understanding the nature and purpose of naming and saving files.

Centres should prepare candidates to choose formats for charts to present information in the most appropriate way and stress the practical nature of using charts. Particular attention is required in the correct naming of axes and the creation of clear titles to convey the purpose of the chart. Where a scale is used on either the x or y axis, candidates must ensure that units are clearly indicated.

Centres should prepare candidates to produce a number of formats for presenting information including, among others: reports, newsletters, posters and presentations. Candidates should be confident in creating and amending formats to present information in the most appropriate way. Centres should stress the practical nature of the communication formats in ICT and candidates should be aware of the purpose of the communication and ensure that their answer is suitable for the purpose.

More preparation is required to help candidates use correct search terms to find information, especially when using multiple search criteria.

Centres should ensure that candidates are sufficiently prepared for databases before they undertake an assessment. When creating reports and queries using a database, candidates should ensure that these are given appropriate and useful titles, which convey their purpose.

Candidates should be reminded that when completing any ICT work, the finished work should be fit for purpose. To that end, candidates should be encouraged to check over their work and rectify any spelling errors or formatting issues.

Candidates should be prepared for using straightforward formula when using spreadsheets. It is also important that candidates understand the purpose and practical application of formula in spreadsheets. Centres should ensure candidates receive practice in using these.

Candidates should be able to pick out the main points in the safe use of computers, for example how to deal with potential threats such as viruses and creating secure passwords.

Candidates should be given practice in describing these key features so that other users would be able to clearly follow their advice. Occasionally some candidates are insufficiently aware of the dangers of virus and software protection. Centres should ensure that all candidates are aware of the potential threats to security from outside sources.

Candidates should be given opportunities to practise their skills prior to sitting the assessment. It is very important that candidates are familiar with the software in use for the assessment and candidates should be given ample time to practise activities using the software available. Centres are strongly encouraged to utilise the practice assessments available on the SQA website on a formative basis, prior to candidates undertaking the final summative examination. Also available on the SQA website is a workbook which gives practice tasks and clear guidance for using the onscreen assessment.

Candidates should be encouraged to adopt a good examination technique, and read the wording of questions thoroughly before answering. Candidates must also understand technical ICT vocabulary, and utilise this accurately.

## **Level 2**

At level 2 it is important that centres prepare candidates so that they give consideration to the purpose for which they are using ICT. They should consider formatting, accuracy and usefulness of the information they are producing and ensure that it is fit for purpose. For example, that posters or presentations meet the requirements of their intended audience, i.e. parents, children, etc.

Candidates should be prepared to use features of electronic messaging including creating folders, deleting, and using features such as bookmarks and electronic organisers. Centres should ensure that candidates are fully aware of the importance of appropriate titles for entries into electronic organisers. Care should be taken when inputting e-mail and web addresses and centres should make candidates aware of the consequences of errors in e-mail or web site addresses.

In tasks involving numerical data candidates should be confident organising data and be prepared to use a range of methods to format and present data in a variety of ways. For example, knowing when it is useful and appropriate to display figures to one, two or no decimal places.

Candidates should be able to describe a range of interface features and system facilities and how these may be adjusted effectively to meet the needs of users. For example, how to change the speed of the mouse.

Centres should also make candidates aware of the skills needed to reflect on effective use of ICT, and work towards making candidates more confident in assessing the effectiveness of their use of ICT. Candidates need practice in critically reviewing their use of ICT and expressing their findings clearly.