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Examiners' Report

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Pearson Edexcel 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 however the spreadsheet skills demonstrated by some candidates showed a lack of ability to use functions efficiently, to sort and to format a spreadsheet effectively. Although many candidates accessed high marks, as in previous series, there are still centres that entered candidates who lacked the knowledge to achieve a pass.

Centres should ensure 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. In some cases the candidates' work was not attached to the cover sheet.

Task 1:

In Task 1 candidates were asked to search the internet to find out what a person who studies dinosaurs is called. In general, this task was well done with most candidates gaining either three or four marks. Some candidates lost a mark because they failed to provide a relevant website address, this was generally because they included the URL of a search engine such as Ask or Google. Candidates should be reminded that Google and Ask are search engines and, therefore, do not fulfil the requirement to enter the website address used to find the required information. The majority of candidates were able to identify the required information; however, some candidates produced a screenshot of a website instead of the search engine used including the search criteria.

Candidates should be encouraged to ensure that their screenshot evidence is readable. Examiners noted that some candidates had produced the correct screenshot, but that it was very difficult or, in some cases, impossible to read the search criteria.

Areas for improvement and development:
- understanding the need for a screenshot of search criteria
- producing a screenshot in which the critical information is clear and easy to read
- recognising the difference between a search engine and a website
- copying website addresses accurately and completely.

Task 2:

In Task 2 candidates were presented with a spreadsheet relating to the sale of dinosaur items in the museum shop. Candidates were asked to enter the data for one item and then calculate the total sales and total income for each item. The next tasks required candidates to sort the spreadsheet in descending order of total sales and to format the spreadsheet to make it clearer and easier to understand. Finally, they were asked to produce a chart to display the total sales for each item.

Almost all candidates entered the data correctly into the spreadsheet. Most candidates used an efficient formula to calculate the total sales per item and replicated it correctly; a lesser number used a correct efficient formula to calculate total income. In some cases candidates used addition rather than multiplication for this calculation. Marks were lost by some candidates because they failed to produce a formula view printout. Many candidates sorted the spreadsheet correctly; however, some candidates sorted the spreadsheet in ascending rather than descending order or did not attempt the sort.

Candidates should be encouraged to add effective formatting which improves the spreadsheet as, in some cases, shading rendered the spreadsheet unreadable. Most candidates produced the bar chart from the required data range with only a small number producing a pie chart.

In some cases candidates failed to add suitable title or axis labels.

Candidates should be encouraged to use the wording of the question to guide them to add a suitable title and axis labels.

Areas for improvement and development:
- producing formula view printouts
- checking that data is formatted effectively
- using font enhancements to improve layout of spreadsheets
- appropriate use of the =SUM function
- replication
- sorting data in a spreadsheet
- selecting data for graphs
- adding suitable titles and axis labels to graphs removing unnecessary legend from graphs
- printing data from a spreadsheet
- printing a chart using appropriate size and proportions, on a separate sheet.

Task 3:

Candidates were required to produce an A4 leaflet about the activities at the museum. 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 and audience. Candidates continue to use WordArt for their titles and should be taught that WordArt is rarely appropriate in business documents and should be encouraged to use alternative features of the software to enhance titles and headings. Some candidates included the whole text file when they were asked to include only relevant text or they omitted information such as the contact details for the museum.

Candidates were instructed to include the information found in Task 1 in a specific place in the text but many positioned this information in other places or deleted some required text when inserting the information.

Candidates need to check that they have met all the criteria for the document using the criteria to guide them. Only a small number of candidates produced a document that was of sufficient overall quality to be fit for purpose.

Areas for improvement and development:
- selecting appropriate software to produce a leaflet
- inserting appropriate text from a text file
- inserting additional text in the correct location
- 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 that a document is fit for purpose.

Task 4:

Candidates were asked to prepare an email to the manager of the museum shop. The majority of candidates successfully demonstrated the use of email software. Most candidates entered the correct email address and a suitable subject. Candidates were required to include a message asking if the information in the leaflet was correct, the majority of candidates did this; however, many lost a mark by using inappropriate salutations or 'text speak' in a business email.

Areas for improvement and development:
- copying email addresses accurately
- choosing suitable a subject
- using a suitable business salutation and tone in the message.

Task 5:

In Task 5(a) candidate had to identify the strongest password from the two given and to give a reason for their choice. The majority of candidates gained two marks in this task, but a minority gave reasons which were too vague to achieve marks.

In Task 5(b), candidates had to produce a screenshot showing all the files created or edited during the test and where they were stored. Almost all candidates produced a screenshot but some candidates lost a mark because not all the files had a meaningful file name. In addition, candidates must take note of the guidance in the 'evidence box' and make sure their screenshot is clear enough to be read.

Areas for improvement and development:
- checking that answers are specific to the question asked
- using a meaningful name when saving or editing files.

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