



Cambridge Nationals

ICT

Level 1/2 Cambridge National Award in ICT **J800**

Level 1/2 Cambridge National Certificate in ICT **J810**

Level 1/2 Cambridge National Diploma in ICT **J820**

OCR Report to Centres November 2015

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It is also responsible for developing new specifications to meet national requirements and the needs of students and teachers. OCR is a not-for-profit organisation; any surplus made is invested back into the establishment to help towards the development of qualifications and support, which keep pace with the changing needs of today's society.

This report on the examination provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding of the specification content, of the operation of the scheme of assessment and of the application of assessment criteria.

Reports should be read in conjunction with the published question papers and mark schemes for the examination.

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Moderated units (R002 – R011)

General Comments:

Only moderated units, submitted either by post or through the use of the OCR Repository, are included in the November series. Unit-specific comments at the end of this report cover units R002, R005 and R006 only, as entries for other units were not high enough to make detailed comments possible.

Whilst most centres submitted their marks to OCR by the required deadline, many did not send the moderator copies and Centre Authentication Form (CCS160) at the same time. This process is explained in Section 6.6 of the 2015/16 'Cambridge Nationals Admin guide' document, downloadable from the OCR website. Centres should not wait until the sample is requested before sending this information to the moderator. Centres are reminded that where there are 15 or fewer candidates, the work of all candidates should be sent to the moderator, without waiting for a sample request email.

Some pleasing work was submitted this session, with candidates demonstrating skills in the use of a wide range of software, although supporting documentation was not always at the same standard, with testing (in those units that require this) often the weakest area.

Some of the best work came from centres where candidates were clearly provided with realistic choices of software and encouraged to come up with original and creative ideas. In contrast, problems continued to be found where candidates' solutions were very similar to each other, due sometimes to practice assignments that were insufficiently different from the final assignment and sometimes to centres providing additional guidance for the assignment tasks. It is essential that candidates are prepared for the assignments by studying the unit content listed in the specification and any practice work must be sufficiently different from the model assignment that it does not lead candidates to particular solutions in the final tasks. Candidates must then make their own decisions about how to approach the final assignment tasks. It is not permitted for teachers to break down the tasks, provide model answers or any additional guidance. Teaching and revision can be carried out as class exercises but these must remain at a general level and should not be directly linked to any assignment task or by implication guide candidates towards particular software or solutions.

Candidates from a number of centres continued to evidence the use of writing frames to complete their assignment tasks. It is not permitted for centre staff to provide such tools for candidates to use in their assessed portfolios. Some centres may have a stock of generic templates for evidencing, for example, testing, but teachers must not guide their candidates to use any such resources – candidates must be free to respond to assignment tasks in the way they think is best. Whilst it is acknowledged that some candidates will choose to use templates that have been provided for previous work there can be no guarantee that table column headings, for example, will be entirely appropriate for the task set. Additionally, the independent creation of tables by candidates could be credited in R002 under Learning Outcome 3 and in other units as transfer of skills from R002. It is not recommended that centres use writing frames within practice assignments, as by doing so candidates are not given practice in creating their own documents from scratch, as they will need to do in the final assessed assignment. Some candidates were disadvantaged by using writing frames that did not always provide prompts that were well matched to the assignment tasks and/or that provided insufficient space for the depth of response needed at the highest level.

Some aspects of most of the model assignments require some written explanations; for example email skills and etiquette in R002, file types in R007 and software features for most units. Inadequate referencing of sources continues to be a problem and centres are referred to the

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JCQ Instructions for Conducting Coursework. Candidates should be provided with the candidate notice within the JCQ Instructions and reminded to reference all sources, whether or not the text has been paraphrased. Credit must only be given to evidence of the candidates' own understanding and not to any text which is merely copied and pasted or copied with minor rewording. Centre assessors need to be vigilant to ensure any copied material that is not referenced is not credited and that appropriate internal procedures are implemented in any case where this is found, following the JCQ instructions.

Centres are increasingly submitting work entirely through electronic files. Problems were often caused by the submission of multiple files with no indication to the moderator of which file(s) need to be opened, in which order, to find evidence to support marks awarded in each area of the assessment evidence grid. Appendix C of the specification document explains the expected format for electronic portfolios. Whilst it is acceptable to submit files that are not linked to an index file, if this is the case then some alternative method of communicating the required information to the moderator must be provided. One simple method would be to use the 'comments' section of the Unit Recording Sheet (URS) not only to explain assessment decisions but also to identify the location of any evidence that has been used in centre assessment. Similarly, if candidates submit work in multi-page electronic documents or in paper portfolios it is essential that the 'page number' column is completed by the centre – as in previous sessions this was rarely the case this session.

Some centres are still submitting samples for moderation with no comments on the URS, thereby providing no guidance for the moderator to show how and why marks have been awarded. An increasing proportion of centres are adding some comments but in many cases these simply repeat or paraphrase the assessment criteria and so are of little, if any, benefit to the moderator in understanding *why* these criteria are considered met. The specification, section 4.4.2, confirms that annotation is required to explain centre assessment decisions. The most helpful comments were those that referred to specific candidate evidence and explained why it was felt that this met particular criteria. These comments often helped the moderator agree centre marks and provide more appropriate and detailed feedback where necessary.

Some centres submitted files in formats that are not listed as acceptable in Appendix C of the specification as they cannot be opened using common software that is either available to all moderators or which can be freely downloaded. Additionally, where candidates submitted documents where non-standard fonts had been used these could not always be viewed correctly by moderators. Centres are advised to ensure any such documents are converted to an acceptable file format, eg pdf, or that they are printed. Alternatively a centre might choose visiting moderation, which is available in January and June. Centres should note that MS Access has been added to the list of acceptable file types but, like MS Excel, it is requested that the centre lets the moderator know which version of this software has been used, as some features are not shown if a file is opened with an earlier version.

Centres are reminded that if they choose postal moderation (or visiting in January or June) work can be submitted as a combination of paper-based portfolios and electronic files. Some centres submitting work electronically by post also included printed copies of the URS for each candidate in the sample, which was much appreciated by moderators. Centres are reminded that postal submissions allow a mixture of paper-based and electronic evidence, so there is no need to scan hand-drawn designs, so long as any hard-copy materials are clearly labelled to show which candidate they belong to and are referenced from the URS.

The majority of centres using the OCR Repository found it an effective way of submitting electronic portfolios but problems were encountered in a minority of cases. It should be noted that the maximum size for a *single* file uploaded to the Repository is currently 20Mb. If files are likely to be larger than the maximum then an alternative option should be selected. Additionally, it is essential that centres carefully follow the instructions for uploading work onto the repository, especially regarding file names – if the convention of starting each file or folder name with the

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candidate number is not followed then the moderator may not see the correct files for each candidate. Several centres had to be contacted to resend their samples because of this problem. If work is uploaded within folders then candidates' original folder structure will be preserved, which may be relevant to marking criteria, only the folder needs to be named in this way – any files inside it do not have to be renamed. The URS should be uploaded with each individual candidate's files – the Administration area is for non-candidate specific documents such as the Centre Authentication Form (CCS160) and MS1 (or equivalent) mark sheets.

As in previous sessions some problems were encountered in moderating sample work when evidence supplied could not be read. In most cases this was due to the use of over-cropped or severely reduced screenshots but problems were also sometimes caused by lack of colour contrast and/or draft printing. If evidence does not support centre assessment decisions then the moderator will be unable to agree the marks awarded. In some cases it appeared that centre assessors must have used alternative/additional evidence when making their assessment decisions, as evidence referred to was either missing or impossible to read. It is essential that moderators are provided with exactly the same evidence that centre assessors used. Centres are reminded that candidates must hand in a completed portfolio of work to be assessed within the centre. This evidence must then be stored securely and send to the moderator if requested. If this procedure is followed then the above issues will not occur and the centre can be confident that the moderator will see exactly the same evidence as centre assessors.

Some centres included witness statements as part of the evidence submitted, either as separate documents or as statements on the URS. Whilst witness statements are an acceptable form of evidence they must comply with the guidance provided in Appendix A of the specification document. In particular this states that a "witness statement should record what the learner has done and in doing so should not seek to repeat or paraphrase the marking criteria." It also states that "Where the above guidance has not been followed, the reliability of the witness statement may be called into question. In circumstances where doubt exists about the validity of a witness statement it cannot be used as assessment evidence and no marks may be awarded on the basis of it." Very few witness statements seen by moderators actually recorded what the candidates had done; rather they generally stated that particular criteria had been met. With no evidence to verify such statements the moderators were unable to support any marks awarded on the strength of them.

Comments on Individual Units:

Comments are made below for the units where there was a significant entry this session. More detailed comments on all units can be found in previous reports from sessions with larger entries. All the significant issues encountered in this session have previously been reported:

R002

Centres submitted work following both the available OCR Model Assignments – 'MstreamIT' and 'JB Clothing Emporium (Tailored Tops)'. These were used with a comparable level of success.

Some centres awarded marks over-generously by applying the assessment criteria only to the best work submitted rather than to the entire response to the stated requirements, ie the assignment tasks. A key differentiator in all areas is the extent to which these requirements have been met. In particular, although Learning Outcome 2 states that candidates will use spreadsheet *or* database software, this acknowledges the fact that any one task is likely to only use one type of software and that some candidates might carry out all tasks using the same software. It does not mean that only one task needs to be assessed – in order to fully meet the stated requirements *all* tasks need to be accurately completed. Similarly some centres over-generously assessed Learning Outcome 3 where candidates had not completed all of the tasks.

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As a business-oriented unit it is expected that candidates gaining high marks will show an understanding of business-appropriate standards as they carry out the tasks in the context of the scenario given. Many candidates' filing systems, email evidence and letters in particular did not demonstrate this understanding and were often over-generously marked by centres.

A number of centres over-generously assessed the range of file types created for Learning Outcome 3 by including in their consideration data handling files that had already been assessed within Learning Outcome 2. It is important that the subject content of a learning outcome is considered when assessing it – in the case of Learning Outcome 3 this is focussed on software to communicate information, not for data handling.

Many candidates improved the readability of their documents by applying a fairly narrow range of formatting tools appropriately but leaving plenty of scope for further improvement. In some cases centre marking over-generously placed such work into Mark Band 3, where it is expected that a thorough approach will be evidenced, applying a wide range of formatting tools, as listed in the specification content, so that further improvements would be difficult to determine.

R005

Centres submitted work that had been prepared using both of the OCR assignments – 'Out & Up' and 'Wind & Waves' and both elicited work across the whole mark range. Some centres had changed the scenario to one they felt was more appropriate to their candidates. This was acceptable in those cases where the tasks were unaltered and only the scenario had been changed. The 'Wind & Waves' assignment was particularly designed to make this type of change possible. However, in some cases the centre scenario was not of an equivalent complexity to the original, thereby not providing candidates the same opportunity for analysis and to extract relevant success criteria. A vague scenario that relies on candidates to choose focus, target audience etc is not true to a vocational setting, where a client would have a number of specific requirements, all of which would be expected to be extracted and converted to measurable success criteria by candidates working at the highest level. In some cases centre scenarios actually provided the success criteria rather than a scenario describing client needs. In both cases candidates were disadvantaged as they were unable to access the higher marks within the first section of the marking criteria.

Candidates created stand-alone presentations, websites and mobile apps using a range of different software.

Some centres' marks in Learning Outcome 1 were over-generous and it appeared that success criteria were not fully understood. These should not be design ideas, rather they should be specific, measurable criteria against which the success of the final product can be evaluated. Designs should follow through from the success criteria.

A variety of software was used by candidates, including some online web-creation and app-creation tools. Whilst these can be acceptable it is important that candidates design their own products and do not rely on pre-populated templates provided by these tools. Where candidates have simply added content to a ready-made product they can be credited only with the use of the most basic tools/techniques and cannot be credited with creating a navigation system if this was simply provided for them.

Some centres submitted work entirely in printed form, which did not provide adequate evidence of the overall quality of the final product and the extent to which it met the client brief. In particular, printed evidence alone is unlikely to show the extent to which hyperlinks, other interactive features and effects have been used or work as intended. Where printed evidence was supplemented by working electronic files these allowed the moderator to easily verify all of these points. If it is not possible to submit files electronically then a detailed witness statement should be provided, explaining all the interactive features and effects that are included, how they

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work and verifying the extent to which the product works as intended. Some candidates using online tools submitted a web link to their product, which was an acceptable alternative to electronic files.

Some problems were encountered with electronic evidence from some centres, where the products submitted did not work as they should. This was often the case with PowerPoint files, when these had not been exported to include all necessary components, leaving video and sound files not working. It is important that any products sent electronically are checked on a standalone computer before being sent to the moderator.

Testing was often a weak point in portfolios, with evidence unclear or absent. Whilst extensive screenshots are not expected, some evidence of what tests were carried out at each stage, with results and evidence of any changes made, is needed before credit can be given. Testing during production and after completion must be different if it is to be considered 'sound' – tests carried out during production will be on an unfinished product and would be expected to test components and features as they are added, whilst testing after completion will be concerned with the finished product.

R006

Submissions were made using both OCR Model Assignments – 'The Camera Never Lies' and 'Keep Pets'. Some centres also provided their own scenarios, some of which worked well whilst others limited the extent to which candidates were able to access the higher marks within the first part of Learning Outcome 1, for the same reasons as given above for R005.

Where candidates were given the freedom to design their own solutions to 'The Camera Never Lies' an excellent range of graphics was seen. In some cases, however, candidates appeared to be following a formula by, for example, taking a photograph and then blending in a single object from another one, with results of varying appropriateness. In some cases candidates focussed on the title of the competition, whilst in others they concentrated on advertising the local area but in only a few cases did candidates ensure both aspects of the brief were fully considered and these generated the higher marks.

The 'Keep Pets' scenario requires candidates to design a new company logo and 'also ... artwork, using composite digital images, that reflects the company's friendly service and aspects of the company's slogan'. In some cases candidates ignored the second requirement and created only a logo, which often required the use of only a very limited range of tools and prevented them from meeting the requirements of the higher mark bands in the second part of Learning Outcome 2.

Marks from some centres could not be supported because there was no evidence for some of the assessment criteria. For example, where candidates did not demonstrate that they had set up canvas size and resolution before creating their graphics – if these settings are changed afterwards the effect can be detrimental to the quality of the final product. Some candidates did not provide evidence of both working files and final output. Additionally, where candidates had not provided evidence of feedback that *they had given* on other people's digital images and/or had not shown any consideration of how they would present their final graphic to the client.

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