

Chief Co-ordinator's Annual Report

ICT

September 2006 - August 2007

OCR Level 2 First Award in ICT
OCR Level 2 National Award in ICT
OCR Level 2 First Certificate in ICT
OCR Level 2 National Certificate in ICT

THE QUALIFICATION

Level 2

The OCR Level 2 Nationals in ICT are available as four different qualifications. All four qualifications require the successful completion of one mandatory unit – Unit 1 – ICT skills for Business. In order to achieve an overall qualification it is necessary to at least achieve a Pass in each unit to be included.

There are 23 units – Units 1 to 18 are nominally allocated 60 guided learning hours (60glh) whilst units 19 to 23 are nominally 30 guided learning hours (30glh).

The qualifications require the following elements in order for accreditation to be awarded:

Qualification	Mandatory	Optional Units	Total Guided Learning Hours (glh)
OCR Level 2 First Award in ICT	Unit 1	1 unit from Units 19 to 23	90glh
OCR Level 2 National Award in ICT	Unit 1	2 units from units 2 to 18 OR 1 unit from 2 to 18 plus 2 units from 19 to 23	180glh
OCR Level 2 First Certificate in ICT	Unit 1	3 units from units 2 to 18 plus 1 unit from 19 to 23 OR 2 unit from 2 to 18 plus 3 units from 19 to 23	270glh
OCR Level 2 National Certificate in ICT	Unit 1	5 units from units 2 to 18 OR 4 unit from 2 to 18 plus 2 units from 19 to 23 OR 3 units from 2 to 18 plus 4 units from 19 to 23	360glh

NOTE: Units 11 and 12 cannot **both** be included in any version of the OCR Nationals in ICT

Introduction:

This report is based on the reports from Team Leaders, additional detailed comments from a large number of Visiting Moderators, conversations with centres during the first year, plus my own input from the many queries and issues that have arisen during this, the first year of the revised OCR Nationals in ICT.

The qualification is being delivered in many different ways. Most centres are completing one unit at a time and then assessing/moderating each one in turn. Some others are setting several assignments designed to cover more than one unit at a time, whilst others are working in a more intense manner and withdrawing students for a block of time to complete a unit. In some examples, specialist ICT centres in some Local Authorities have withdrawn a group of students for two weeks from their normal schools, and completed all the teaching and learning required for the students to complete assessments in a unit at the end of their period at the centre.

Centres report that a very positive feature of the OCR Nationals in ICT is the flexibility in delivery of the qualification. Many centres have held off registering candidates for several months in order to determine which final qualification would be most suitable for each one. Others have registered candidates at the earliest possible stage to establish contact with OCR and to trigger a direct link with their Visiting Moderator. Many of these centres have requested and received early moderation visits in order to confirm initial standards of assessment and internal moderation procedures.

The qualification is being delivered alongside GCSEs and other general and/or vocational qualifications.

Many centres have commented on the clarity of unit structure and assessment objectives and have reported that it is more suitable for their candidates than other ICT qualifications. Large numbers of centres have switched from other Level 2 ICT qualifications to the OCR Nationals in ICT, and have commented favourably on the transfer process. Some have switched mid-year where candidates had already complete one or more units of other qualifications – and have made effective use of existing evidence to match the assessment requirements for some of the AOs in the unit specifications – adding additional evidence as required to meet other elements. Centres have also reported that the nature of the qualification, and the wide range of units assists candidate motivation and enthusiasm towards the programme.

OCR Centre Handbooks are available to download from the website www.ocr.org.uk.

CENTRE PRACTICE

Delivery methods

A range of delivery models is being used in centres. Some centres have either delivered one unit at a time or used a linear approach (all units delivered across the year).

The course is being offered mainly to years 10 and 11, with some centres starting early for year 9's - this is particularly apparent where the centre already has a collapsed Key Stage 3 curriculum model. In addition to this, many other centres are planning an innovative approach to the delivery of this course – starting it in Yr9 so everyone achieves The First Award and then “topping up” to one of the larger qualifications for students selecting ICT as one of their options for Years 10 and 11. Many centres are delivering these qualifications

with a full cohort of students, differentiation occurring both in terms of levels achieved within units but also in terms of the size of the qualification being undertaken.

Most centres have started by delivering Unit 1, the mandatory unit, then moving onto specialist units, often selected by the centre for all students to study. In subsequent years, using the experience gained in this first year, a proportion of these intend to alter the order that units are delivered in. Most centres have used the model assignment for unit 1 – “Downloadable Tunes” and then resources from existing GNVQ programmes or tasks that they have created themselves.

The size of the delivery team varies from one to many staff, including some non-specialists. Conversations with centre staff indicate that many have previous experience of delivering other ICT qualifications; most commonly GNVQ ICT Intermediate. Some centres are developing links with industry to ensure the vocationality of the programme. Visiting speakers and visits to places of work are becoming an increasingly important delivery tool.

There are a variety of good practices observed in centres to enhance the delivery of the Level 2 programmes. These include:

- work experience
- input from specialists from other departments
- visits to local businesses
- use of guest speakers from the ICT industry
- joint curriculum planning with different subject areas (such as Science and DT)
- links with local school and colleges.

However, not all such experiences are being used to maximise research and/or assessment opportunities. As centres become more familiar with the units, and the possible links between them, it is anticipated that industry contact will be used to greater effect.

Work experience is becoming a feature of programme delivery in some centres. Centres are tending to include this towards the end of the summer term. It is hoped that more centres will use work placements in the second year of delivery to enhance the vocational relevance of these programmes.

Centres would benefit from liaising with other centres in their area to discuss/develop assignments, assessment methods, delivery strategy. Evidence of networking with other schools is mixed. In some cases there are already Local Authority support networks in operation, with a very active involvement in developing strategies and providing advice and support – in other cases schools and colleges are working in isolation with little contact with each other or with support groups.

There are already several web-based support groups and forums which are very active and where information and materials are shared. These materials have been developed by centres for particular units, often to further illustrate existing model assignments.

Units

Apart from Unit 1 which is mandatory, the most popular units appear to be:

- Unit 2: Webpage creation
- Unit 3: Digital Imaging
- Unit 4: Multimedia products
- Unit 21: Creating computer graphics for use on the WWW
- Unit 22: Creating sound using ICT
- Unit 23: Creating video

Some centres have also started to look at units 8 and 20.

Other units which have been presented for moderation this year include Units 6, 7, 13,

There is evidence that centres are starting to make links between units, with a number cross-referencing Unit 2: Webpage creation with Unit 21: Creating computer graphics for use on the WWW. There are opportunities to develop this further, ie Unit 20: Creating Animations for the WWW using ICT and Unit 4: Multimedia products.

There have been no particular issues with obtaining resources for most of the units. There are a range of texts on the market, as well as commercially produced e-learning packages and a mass of internet sites. Many centres are sharing online materials which they have developed internally, and providing this access free of charge to other schools and colleges. Industry links have provided excellent information for candidates, as well as helping to update staff. Centres have been able to adapt many of the resources used for previous ICT qualifications.

In most centres care has been taken when using the internet. Measures are taken to ensure candidates do not download information and present it as their own. There is still a tendency to assume that online information is correct and centres are advised to make candidates question the reliability and accuracy of some online material.

Candidates tend to rely on the Internet as a source of information. Where authentication issues have arisen many centres have asked candidates to rework their evidence or used question and answer sessions, or group discussion to check understanding, with a witness statement provided to justify the grading awarded.

Centre-devised assignments

Some centres have written their own assignments for the optional units but rarely have they done so for the mandatory unit. In some centres excellent practice has been observed: the tasks were set within a vocational context, they met the requirements of assessment objectives and the grading descriptors had been consulted to ensure the tasks allowed candidates to achieve higher grades. A large number of centres have also used commercially produced assignments, mostly to good effect.

Some centre-devised assignments required candidates to produce more evidence than that required by the assessment objective and grading descriptor. In a minority of cases candidates had not met the assessment objectives as they had not been set suitable tasks. On occasions, centres have set tasks that are driven solely by the Knowledge, Understanding and Skills list and that are not related to the assessment objectives, to which the grading criteria applies.

Where centres have based their assessments on the OCR grading grid for the unit, their own assignments have often been very successful, using locally relevant scenarios. However, some have been over-prescriptive, stifling candidates' creativity and leading to over-similar solutions.

In some cases, assignments originally developed for GNVQ ICT have been adapted and used. In others, work completed for other Level 2 qualifications in ICT has been used, along with additional evidence to ensure that assessment objectives are met.

Some centres have written different or more limited tasks for their weaker candidates. In a small number of cases groups of students have been set restricted activities based on the

expected “class performance level” – in one case some elements of Pass requirements were not in evidence due to the setting of tasks only related to higher levels.

Where centres set their own assignments it is essential that they use the specification grading grids to determine the grade awarded for each Assessment Objective rather than relying on some other set of assessment criteria which often do not relate effectively to the actual specification requirements.

A variety of commercial packages are being used to support this qualification. Whilst these have often provided extremely useful materials, it is important that all centres familiarise themselves with the requirements of each unit they deliver, and that they carry out final assessment and recording using **only** the OCR grading grid.

OCR model assignments

Where centres have marked using the OCR grading grid, using the model assignments has usually ensured success. However, a number of centres simply marked the tasks, or used the candidate checklist, leading to inaccurate assessment.

Some centres have modified the OCR model assignments ‘to make them more suitable for our students’. This has sometimes meant giving more guidance than is acceptable.

Many centres have asked about model assignments for other units, feeling much more confident about using these than creating their own.

Centres have used model assignments and one centre has made the downloadable tunes assignment into a web based assignment which was very interesting to see.

Quality assurance

In some cases centre staff are guiding candidates too much, leading to all candidates having the same solution to a problem. For example, spreadsheet solutions and database structures are the same for everyone in the centre, suggesting that staff could be designing them for the candidates.

A mixture of assessment practices has been seen – some centres are very good and follow robust quality assurance processes, some centres new to Internal Moderation have had difficulty and there has been a lack of consistency across different teachers

However, in the majority of centres, good practice for centre assessment has been evident. Centres have carefully matched evidence to the grading descriptors. Comprehensive feedback to candidates has been given. Internal moderation has been undertaken and records kept showing which units have been internally moderated, by whom, from which candidates and outcomes achieved. Good practice has also been demonstrated by providing written feedback to assessors following the internal moderation process. In most cases, all records have been made available to the Visiting Moderators during their visits.

In some centres, internal moderation was either not recorded or not comprehensive. Centres are advised that it is a requirement for assessors’ judgements/decisions to be quality assured across the centre through internal moderation.

Support

A range of text books and e-learning materials for the OCR Level 2 Nationals in ICT have been available since September 2006 and are widely used by centres.

There is a range of publications on offer which support the delivery of the Level 2 qualification. There are also reasonably priced journals which can be used to provide short articles and case study material for some units. DVD/video material is also available to support delivery.

Many centres have been to the OCR training events or organised their own through the LRC or their own centres. Those centres who have attended the training events for this new qualification have reported that they are more confident in the delivery and assessment of these programmes. OCR Training is running further subject-specific courses on planning and delivering the OCR Nationals in 2007-2008.

The FAQ is available as an ongoing source of support for centres. It now contains responses to very large numbers of queries submitted by centres during the first year of the qualification, and will continue to grow as more units are covered and queries arise. In every case, responses on the FAQ are confirmed by a Subject Officer at OCR before being posted as a definitive statement of clarification. The FAQ should always be consulted by centres before submitting queries to OCR as the issue has a good chance of already being listed and clarified.

Scheme-specific issues

Some centres have had difficulties meeting some requirements because of centre network restrictions. It appears that some network policies may be detrimental to good teaching and learning experiences. For example, on occasions moderators have seen that some pass criteria had not been met but AOs still awarded – e.g. where centres have a “locked down” network in relation to creating shortcuts.

In a minority of cases assessors did not match the candidate evidence to the grading descriptors when assessing. This meant that Visiting Moderators found that some evidence had been graded too leniently by assessors. Care should be taken to ensure that the grading descriptors and the assessment objectives are met when assessing evidence.

It is important that candidates are given feedback about the evidence that is produced. This should be done throughout the production of evidence for the unit to enable candidates to improve the quality of their work. Feedback following assessment is essential to aid the development of candidates. Feedback should be specific and constructive.

Evidence

Candidates from some centres have produced very thick paper portfolios with many screenshots evidencing *how* every objective was achieved. In some cases this has been virtually every button press and menu choice. Where VMs have made this recommendation, most centres have welcomed the possibility of providing electronic evidence. Some were initially reluctant, fearing that this had to be in some pre-determined e-portfolio format.

At times there is a specific requirement to print evidence – eg Unit 1, AO5. In others, printing is implied, eg Unit 1 AO6 reports. Some candidates seem to get so carried away with creating screenshots of everything, apparently forgetting that they can simply print some of the evidence and include it alongside screenshots.

In units requiring testing, although it often says that screenshots evidencing the tests are not required, some candidates are being credited simply for a test table with 'it worked as expected' in every row, even though it patently wouldn't. In these cases, screenshots may be helpful in supporting such claims!

Some centres did not appear to realise that electronic evidence is just as acceptable as any other type – and for some units electronic evidence makes the moderation process much easier and efficient (eg. for units 2, 4, 22, 23 etc). Where centres receive suitable advice and guidance during their first moderation visit, this helps them to make the necessary adjustments for further visits.

Administration issues for centres

Some centres have entered candidates for the wrong qualification, whilst others have entered for single units in error, thinking they had to write down the units they wanted moderating when they entered candidates.

A significant number of centres waited until the end of the year before entering candidates, so missing out on the support available from an early moderation visit.

Interpretation

A number of common misinterpretations have been seen:

Unit 1

Unit 1 is 'ICT skills for business' and business standards are expected. In many cases candidates are submitting evidence of work that does not fit into this context. Most often this is in emails, where the subject and content are either missing or inappropriate/purposeless. If work was done in a more integrated way it might make more sense to candidates. For example, they often search for information in AO2 with no real purpose, and the information/images they find here are never used elsewhere in the unit. The nature of Unit 1 is that there are many parts to it – and these cover a wide range of ICT skills, knowledge and understanding. As it is a mandatory unit, centres appear to accept the need for such a broad unit as an essential part of the qualification

- Unit 1, AO1, password protection. Many centres have allowed candidates to password protect the contents of a spreadsheet worksheet, or even to restrict editing and formatting of a word-processed document. Some centres erroneously believe they cannot password protect documents simply because network restrictions prevent them doing this from the operating system.
- Unit 1, AO1, backing up of work – sometimes this is not evident
- Unit 1, AO2, some centres have taken 'forwarding' an email to be the same as sending an email – this is not the case. Also some centres have produced step by step instructions on how to create an email but then there is no evidence of the actual work product
- Unit 1, AO3. Some centres appear not to (be able to) distinguish between slide transitions and animations. Other centres are giving credit for including animated gifs, rather than for animating elements of the slides. A few centres have missed the point, clearly in the guidance, that the presentation is to accompany a talk, leading to multimedia, interactive presentations, as per GNVQ, rather than what is required here.
- Unit 1, AO4, inserting fields. A number of centres are accepting the use of merge fields here, rather than the specific insertion of fields, including date and document information, as required by the grading grid.

- Unit 1, AO5, some centres have not understood what is meant by ‘showing that data has been changed’
- Unit 1, AO6, sorting. Some centres seem to have missed this altogether, whilst others are just using the sort button on a table, rather than including it in the settings of a query.

Unit 2

- Unit 2, AO4. There seems to be considerable confusion about what ‘additional interactive elements’ are. Some centres are awarding this just for a number of different rollovers, or for rollover buttons, ie hyperlinked.
- Unit 2, AO7. In some cases candidates produce very brief evaluations not covering the requirements of the grading grid. This is particularly the case where candidates list the strengths and weaknesses of a website which is not their own.

Unit 3, 4, 7

Some misinterpretations of how to present the images for unit 3 have been seen and some centres were unsure of how to apply the holistic approach. Some centres had created their own checklists which showed all the criteria for pass, the “what they thought” additional bits for merit and then distinction – this approach does not work and results in either over or under assessment and centres have been discouraged from this approach and encouraged to have checklists that show everything in all boxes.

- Many centres have not understood the level of planning required to achieve the highest grades.
- Unit 3: In one centre a CV and letter of employment were produced by candidates – this was inappropriate

Units 20 – 23

- Units 20-23, AO1. A number of candidates have misinterpreted the requirements, reviewing, for example, entire websites/web pages instead of graphics (unit 21) complete feature films instead of video clips (unit 23), complete radio programmes instead of sound clips/adverts for unit 22) and complete animated feature films instead of clips for unit 20. Centres have often not picked this up and have credited it.
- Unit 20, AO1, the requirement explained in the guidance, to review two different **types** of animation, is often missed.
- Unit 20, AO3. A number of centres are giving credit for looping, simply because candidates have saved a Flash animation in default mode, which loops continuously. I have to admit I accepted this initially as a moderator before I realised it was a default setting. I suspect many other moderators will have done the same if they are not familiar with the software.
- Unit 21, AOs 3 and 4. A number of centres have not guided candidates to produced *separate* navigation bars and buttons. Instead they have created three buttons, then made these into a navigation bar.
- Unit 21, AO5. Some centres have awarded Distinction because the banner includes an animated gif from clip art.

Other units

- All units. Some centres are taking a very generous approach towards the idea of ‘best fit’, regardless of the quality of the work produced.
- The FAQ includes details of responses to numerous queries submitted to OCR during the year. It includes details of many of these, and many other misinterpretations or elements of the specification where some clarification has been requested.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO CENTRES

Delivery

- Avoid doing all units through a linear approach as no units will be complete until the end of the course. Discuss your delivery pattern with your Visiting Moderator to ensure that a visit can be arranged to moderate assessment decisions.
- Consider short-intensive periods of delivery.
- Centres should link delivery of underpinning knowledge and/or assessment where possible.
- Continue to use links with the ICT industry to support underpinning knowledge, enhance delivery or provide assessment opportunities.
- Ensure there are sufficient guided learning hours to enable the curricula to be covered in sufficient depth to facilitate candidate's learning. The recommended 60/30 guided learning hours per unit should be used as a guide.
- Continue to use a range of delivery methods. Good practice has included case study analysis, site visits, use of guest speakers, talks by organisations, use of school and local facilities, and working in partnership with local schools/colleges to organise a range of ICT-related events.
- More than one member of staff should deliver the qualification.

Assessment

- Plan to complete at least one or two units early on in the course so that the Visiting Moderator can visit to moderate assessment decisions and provide advice. Have examples of ongoing portfolios/list of questions for other units available at this visit.
- Do not leave the second visit till after candidates have left for the term.
- Care should be taken with centre-devised assignments. Tasks set should directly meet the requirements of the assessment objectives and grading descriptors. The internal moderation process should be used to ensure that centre-devised assignments meet the requirements of the assessment objectives.
- Take care that centre-devised assignments do not result in over-assessment, with candidates being asked to produce evidence to meet the Knowledge, understanding and skills listing rather than the assessment objectives. The Knowledge, understanding and skills listing serves to inform the delivery; it is NOT the vehicle for assessment.
- Grading descriptors should be checked to ensure that evidence requested allows candidates to meet requirements of higher grades. This has implications for the method of assessment adopted, ie poster presentations or leaflets.
- Provide guidance to candidates regarding research techniques. Candidates should not rely solely on the internet.
- Encourage correct referencing and the use of reference pages. Information taken directly from text must be referenced. Downloaded material must be correctly acknowledged.

- Where assessment takes place by oral presentation the assessment records must indicate clearly how/where the assessment objectives have been met. It is good practice to provide witness statements for any practical work undertaken by candidates showing exactly what has been carried out and the level of competency achieved. Visiting Moderators do not need to watch video-tapes of presentations but do need to see how the centre has arrived at their assessment decision.
- Where question and answer sessions are used to check understanding, a record of questions asked and information given MUST be provided.
- Where group work is a feature of a unit, candidates need to specify their role and contribution in the production of material.
- Internal moderation should take place throughout the year. Centres should internally moderate a sample from all units and all assessors. Discrepancies need to be recorded, with the agreed outcome documented.
- Internal moderation records should be available for the Visiting Moderator.