

Chief Co-ordinator's Annual Report

REPORT FOR PUBLICATION

QUALIFICATIONS

OCR Level 3 National Certificate in ICT
OCR Level 3 National Diploma in ICT
OCR Level 3 National Extended Diploma in ICT

CENTRE PRACTICE

The OCR Nationals in ICT, Level 3, became available for first teaching in September 2008 following the success of the revised Level 2 suite, launched in 2006. During this first year the majority of units submitted for moderation have been mandatory units, although some centres have also submitted optional units.

It is unfortunate that few commercial resources have been published to support the teaching of this suite of qualifications. Whilst this has created additional work for centres, many have begun to work together and share resources. The OCR e-community (http://community.ocr.org.uk/community/ocr_nationals_in_ict_level_3/home) has been well used by a number of centres, some of whom have uploaded their own resources onto the member documents area, which has been appreciated. It should be noted that documents in this area are not checked or approved by OCR in any way, but are offered by centres and feedback is also appreciated. All centres are encouraged to join this e-community, make use of existing resources and share ones that they have created themselves.

The requirements of the mandatory units were clarified with the issue of revised unit specifications in the Autumn term of 2008. Moderation during 2008-9 has accepted either original or revised unit specifications but it is essential that all cohorts beginning one of the mandatory units from September 2009 will use the revised unit specifications, which are available for download from the OCR website.

Delivery methods

Methods of delivery have varied between centres, reflecting the flexibility of the qualification suite. Many Centres have a small team of one or two teachers delivering the course whereas other centres have much larger teams with more units in progress at any one time. The latter model has generally been found in Colleges rather than schools, where candidates might be studying for one of the Diplomas.

In some centres staff are delivering a level 3 qualification for the first time and some difficulties have been found where insufficient stretch and challenge has been provided, with expectations below the required level. Where centres have experience of delivering other Level 3 qualifications this has been less of an issue.

Centres have provided evidence in both electronic and paper form. Whilst centres can choose to provide evidence in the form they feel is most appropriate it is important that all

evidence can be easily found by the visiting moderator. Provision of electronic files can often allow more accurate assessment than paper alone and can reduce the requirement for candidates to provide screen prints. Some problems have been experienced during moderation visits where electronic evidence has not been easy to find.

Although many centres have had successful moderations with units certificated a significant number of moderation visits in 2008-9 were for partially completed portfolios only, with no certification claimed, whilst others were not successful as the candidates had not met the required standard. It is important to realise that there is a minimum standard expected for Level 3 work and work falling below this level should not be accepted. However, the fact that claims can be withdrawn at the visit for additional work to be completed, without embarrassment or cost to the school or staff, has meant that even where moderation has not been able to agree with centre claims it has usually been a helpful experience. Feedback from centres after moderation has generally been positive, with centre representatives welcoming the immediate feedback and opportunity for questions/discussion.

OCR has provided a Model Assignment for each of the mandatory units, 1-4. Where these have been used, candidates have proved more likely to meet the requirements. When creating an assignment or using a commercially produced assignment it is essential that centres check that it will allow candidates to produce evidence for *all* Pass criteria. Reference to the OCR Model Assignment can also provide suggestions for the amount of guidance that can be provided and the type of evidence that is considered suitable. It is also essential that centre staff mark the portfolios according to the grading grid in the unit specification and not using any other checklist that might be provided as part of an assignment.

Some problems found during moderation have been caused by assignments where tasks have not given candidates sufficient opportunities to provide evidence covering all the requirements for each Assessment Objective (AO). A number of centres have revised assignments following visiting moderator feedback and made successful submissions on subsequent moderation visits.

A number of centres cancelled arranged moderation visits at short notice, which is regrettable, as every centre with candidate entries is entitled to two visits each year, which can be used to gain valuable feedback on progress, even if units have not been completed, so long as at least some AOs have been completed, marked and internally moderated.

The standard of internal moderation has proved variable. Centres are reminded that it is essential that internal moderation is carried out before grades are sent to the visiting moderator in preparation for a moderation visit. Differences in standards between different assessors and/or different units cause problems and delays for visiting moderators. Where internal moderation finds any differences in standards it is important that affected assessors reconsider *all* candidates, not just the work that has been used for internal moderation.

Centres have sometimes commented that the paperwork – CMSLs and CRFs – required for moderation has been unwieldy. OCR has responded to this by developing an electronic claims system, which was trialled in June/July of 2009. This system will be used for all moderation visits and unit claims from September. Guides for centres using this system have been sent to all centres.

During this first year there has been a disturbing amount of work submitted that includes large quantities of text copied and pasted from websites. This has been especially the case with sections of units 1 and 2, also some of the more research-focussed optional units. The problems are often identified by moderators, who notice a change in the language used, often in the level of technical language. A quick entry of a phrase into an internet search engine often reveals the source. It is essential that centres have sufficient systems in place to prevent this practice by candidates and to ensure that if any such content is submitted that

the internal assessors will identify it and deal with the issue appropriately. If moderators find evidence of a problem with copied work then it is likely that the centre will face a malpractice investigation.

Comments on the Units

As this was the first year of the qualification the majority of units submitted were for the mandatory units. Consequently the feedback here relates largely to these, although significant points from the optional units are also included. Some optional units were not presented this year, or were presented by only one or two centres. For this reason there are some units for which there are no comments below.

Mandatory units

Unit 1

It should be noted that the OCR Model Assignment has an integrated approach to the provision of evidence for some of the Assessment Objectives (AOs), which reduces the potential for duplication of evidence. However, if this approach is used it is important that work is clearly referenced to show where evidence for each AO can be found.

AO1 requires candidates to investigate the role and contribution of communication technology to business. The three methods identified in the specification are email, networks (intranet and internet) and conferencing (video-, tele-, web- and instant messaging). Whilst this list might not be considered exhaustive, it is inappropriate for candidates to consider other types of communications, eg written, which cannot be considered to be communication technology. Additionally it is not appropriate to focus on specific technological products. Centres are advised to focus on the list given.

AO1 requires *descriptions* of the technologies and explanations of their *advantages and disadvantages*, with *examples* to illustrate the advantages and disadvantages. It is common to find centres where one or more of these three aspects are missing. The purpose of the examples is for candidates to demonstrate their understanding by giving real or deduced examples of the advantages and disadvantages of these methods when used in business situations.

At the higher levels, AO1 requires candidates to consider the *role of communications technology in the growth of e-commerce, e-business and e-marketing*. Whilst some descriptions of these terms would be appropriate here, simple descriptions do not meet the requirements. Candidates should consider ways in which different communications technologies have contributed to the growth of these methods. For e-commerce, for example, they might consider the developments in commercial websites, including secure servers, the development of more secure payment methods, also the increased availability of internet access and broadband to the general public, all of which have contributed to the growth of e-commerce beyond its beginnings as a method of exchanging funds between large companies.

There was a typographical error in the revised version of the grading grid for AO2 at Pass level. The correct wording is 'Candidates will *give* a limited explanation of some of the aids and barriers to effective communication'

The focus of AO2 must be on *aids and barriers* - this is entirely different from the descriptions in AO1. Candidates should research and consider what makes communication more or less effective using different methods. Again, examples are required to show good understanding. This was best evidenced where candidates had found real examples of, for example, emails, web pages, forms, letters, advertising materials, presentations etc that communicated well and/or badly. A range of aids and barriers for consideration are given in

the KUS.

AO3 requires candidates to create *templates* not complete documents. It is expected that these will be sufficient to allow a user to easily create documents of the intended types, maintaining the house style set. Evidence of usability is difficult to provide on paper, so the provision of electronic template files is useful to the moderator. Consideration should be given to which elements are standard, so required in the template, and which need to be inserted by the user. Professional templates that come with applications software might be studied prior to candidates completing their own. Elements such as the inclusion of fields (eg dates) and macro buttons and/or macros and/or form tools to simplify the entry of routine elements could be considered. It should be noted that to gain Distinction in this AO, candidates must set text styles within each template, although it might be expected that many more candidates will do this, in order to create usable templates.

Some candidates have edited professional templates, which is an easy way of including functionality such as fields. Providing sufficient editing is carried out to set and maintain the house style designed by the candidate this is acceptable.

Where a number of templates are to be created using the same software, eg word processor, candidates might be advised to create one 'master' template, with the general layout features such as logo and company name, and the text styles. This can then be edited to create individual templates for the different styles of document required.

The documents required for AO4 can be created for any purpose. It is possible to include work for other AOs to provide content, as suggested in the OCR Model Assignment.

Centres often assess the quality of documents very generously. Where generic business documents are created (eg memos, letters, reports, invoices) these should comply with generally agreed standards. When creating, for example, leaflets, web pages and presentations, text size, amount of text, paragraph formatting, hyphenation and white space should be considered. Business cards are too trivial to be considered 'written communication' at this level.

There are a few specific techniques that are listed in the grading grid – tables, bullets, auto-numbering, columns and text boxes. To be credited, these must be more than defaults, eg default text boxes and/or bullets on a presentation slide and tables in spreadsheet software. Column formatting is a feature entirely separate from columns within tables or created manually from text boxes. Good use of the listed features might include numbering (with sub-numbering) of sections within a report; bulleting of lists, correctly indented, where appropriate in a range of documents; appropriately structured and formatted tables in an invoice or showing summary data in other documents; text boxes, appropriately linked, in a leaflet or web page, and text in columns if appropriate on a word-processed document.

To be credited, in AO6, candidates' descriptions of security issues and avoidance methods must be accurate and must relate to documents and computers *in the workplace*. The differences between Pass, Merit and Distinction relate not only to the number of issues covered but also the level of detail given in the candidates' descriptions.

AO7 requires evidence of good working practices and understanding of some issues such as file versions and access permissions. Many centres have awarded levels over-generously in this AO without clear evidence. A specific witness statement might be appropriately used to confirm the extent to which each candidate has complied with health and safety requirements. Screenshot evidence might be provided to show directory structures and backups.

Understanding of versions might be shown well if candidates investigated the *versions* feature of some applications software, eg MS Word. Access permissions might be more

easily understood by considering access on a network.

Unit 2

Although the main focus of this unit is on collaborative working there is also a considerable emphasis on research skills, in particular web searching. There has been some evidence of candidates attempting the assessment for this unit without the necessary preparation/teaching, so unaware of different search engine techniques and of collaborative document editing.

Candidates need to work together to produce a product that requires the inclusion of text and graphics from a range of sources. Collaborative editing tools, including comments and tracked changes should be used at the higher levels. Consequently a substantial document, such as suggested in the OCR Model Assignment, would be the most appropriate outcome. In some cases the documents produced by candidates have been too small to provide sufficient opportunity for the inclusion of information from the range of sources required.

It is important that tasks are allocated equally, to allow all candidates the opportunity to meet all assessment objectives. In some cases candidates have, for example, allocated one group member the role of 'editor', and defined the role as one which does not require any research, and so this candidate has been disadvantaged.

Collaborative working is specifically assessed in Assessment Objectives (AOs) 1 and 6 but it is expected that candidates will work together more closely throughout the creation of their own tasks, using appropriate communication and collaborative editing tools to share information and give feedback. Where this has happened, candidates have been able to provide evidence of communications etc as part of their evidence in AO7. There are many free project management sites available on the internet that could be used for this unit.

Although candidates will work together in groups, each candidate must submit an individual portfolio of evidence.

AO1 requires candidates to work as a group to plan their product. This will involve discussion time and the use of appropriate planning tools, eg mind maps. Many centres have provided their candidates with access to mind-mapping software and this has been largely beneficial.

As the planning documents are most likely to be the same for all members of the group it is essential that there is clear evidence of the extent to which each group member has contributed effectively to the planning activities. Whilst candidate statements can be useful here, individual teacher witness statements also prove extremely useful. The lack of clear evidence for this part of the AO has caused problems at moderation in many centres.

Time planning has often been poorly done, with little consideration of how the tasks need to be broken down or of the need to monitor and adjust timescales shown. Many centres have provided candidates with access to Gantt chart software whilst others have produced equally acceptable Gantt charts using spreadsheet software. There are some Gantt chart templates that can be obtained from websites.

Success criteria have often been poorly understood, by both centre staff and candidates. These should be statements covering a range of aspects of the project, which could be used as test criteria to help in the evaluation of the work after it has been completed. A good range of success criteria will refer to the content and quality of the product, time scales and collaborative working.

AO2 requires candidates to research a range of communication methods and methods of sharing information. A list of suitable methods for study is given in the KUS and centres are

advised to guide their candidates towards these. Best practice would be for candidates to study the different methods, evaluating their usefulness for their own work, after which they would continue to use the chosen methods. It is advisable to ensure that all candidates study the collaborative editing tools provided by their application software, in particular versions, comments and tracked changes, as these are required at the higher levels in AO5.

All candidates are required to use examples to illustrate their comments. This is more than simply naming a website offering the facility. Where possible candidates should demonstrate their use.

AO3 requires candidates to investigate the use of different search engines and search techniques. Experience from this first year suggests that these are poorly understood and it is recommended that some teacher input is provided here. Descriptions can only be credited if they are correct. There is a wealth of information available on the internet to support this AO. www.searchenginewatch.com is one such website, with <http://searchenginewatch.com/2168031> and <http://searchenginewatch.com/2155981> providing useful starting points at the time of writing this report. It should be particularly noted that the index is a significant part of a crawler-based search engine and that descriptions of crawler bots searching the whole WWW when a user enters a search criterion do not show sufficient understanding. Similarly, examples of Boolean operators used with search engines such as Google, which do not use them, cannot be credited.

There are three parts to the requirements for this AO – descriptions of different types of search engine, descriptions of different search techniques and a comparison of the results of searches carried out using different techniques on different types of search engine. It is common for candidates to provide insufficient evidence of comparing the use of the different techniques in the required range of search engines. Comparisons should consider both number and relevance of hits.

Good practice would be to evidence the different search techniques whilst searching for relevant information for the group project.

Whilst Boolean operators are acceptable techniques to investigate it might be more useful for candidates to study more generally used techniques, such as key words, the Advanced Search options and wildcards, as these are more likely to prove useful to them in their future work.

For AO4, candidates should first consider the information they need for their part of the group project. As previously stated, this should be sufficiently substantial to require a range of both text and graphics that can be found from a range of sources. They should then provide evidence of searching for the information they require.

Comments on suitability, reliability and copyright have sometimes been below an acceptable standard at this level. Candidates must demonstrate some considered assessment of the suitability of each item found for the purpose, and it might be expected that some items will be rejected and further searching carried out to find more suitable items. At a minimum, when considering reliability, candidates should identify, if available, the owner/provider of the website and the date the page/site was last updated, with appropriate comments if this information is not available. Commenting on copyright is more than a generic statement – candidates must identify whether or not each item is protected by copyright, and if so, who the copyright holder is.

AO5 assesses the contribution of the candidate to the group project, which in most cases will be a significant document. The quality of documents produced by many candidates has been a cause for concern. This often reflects poor planning, where groups have not sufficiently considered what will be needed to produce a high quality final product.

It is important that candidates provide evidence of the sources of text and graphics used in their final product. This can often be found within AO4.

The bibliography can be created as part of the document or as a separate part of the portfolio. Captions/cross-references should show the source of the individual items used, including any copyright details.

AO6 requires candidates to review each other's contributions and act upon comments received. It is not necessary for all of this collaboration to take place after the individual contributions have been finished. Some candidates have provided evidence of using a variety of communication methods and collaborative tools throughout their work to ensure they are keeping to a consistent style/format and avoiding overlap of content. This is good practice.

It is important that candidates provide clear evidence of both the feedback they give to other group members and that which they receive. Problems have occurred in moderation where only one of these have been provided and other candidates' work has had to be found in order to locate the remaining evidence required.

Where candidates have carried out in-depth investigations in AO2 they have been better equipped to complete this AO at a higher level. Best practice in the use of document versions would be to use the facility provided by applications software rather than simply saving a number of different versions, although the latter is acceptable if the software used does not offer an alternative.

Even at Pass level it is expected that candidates will provide valid, considered comments on *all* aspects listed in the grading grid for AO7. The guidance for the unit states that 'Candidates should refer back to the deadlines and success criteria produced for Assessment Objective 1. The extent to which deadlines have been followed and met will be an important consideration when assessing the effectiveness of the group and its members.' Regrettably on a number of occasions moderation has been unable to support centre claims for this AO, due to over-brief and general comments.

Unit 3

Most centres have used the OCR model assignment for this Unit, although many have chosen a different focus for research, or allowed candidates to choose their own.

Where a suitable hypothesis has been well defined this has usually resulted in a successful portfolio, Centres are recommended to check candidates' hypotheses before moving onto the rest of the portfolio, in order to ensure this is sufficiently clear and offers the opportunity for relevant and useful data to be gathered and analysed in the time available.

In AO1 candidates generally have been able to carry out appropriate research in order to explain the background to the problem. Some centres have misinterpreted the requirement for a hypothesis and guided their candidates to ask questions rather than to suggest a hypothesis. The guidance in the unit specification clarifies the difference between simple and complex hypotheses.

It is important that all candidates meet **all** the Pass requirements within AO1. Failure to define the data that needs to be collected and how it is to be processed results in candidates failing this AO. As this AO is about planning it is not sufficient to award this on the basis of data that is later collected and processed.

Although candidates are required to show an understanding of Data Protection legislation it is not necessary for them to provide detailed summaries of the DPA. Rather, they should show an understanding of its requirements with respect to data collection/storage for

statistical purposes, and the definition of personal data, which in most cases should result in them not storing data from which individuals can be recognised.

Research techniques, especially sampling and potential errors, are often poorly understood by candidates and benefit might be gained by more teaching of this aspect of the unit before portfolio work is undertaken. It is important that candidates plan their data collection carefully to ensure that data is collected in a form that they can analyse. Frequency and interval are not relevant where candidates are collecting their data using a questionnaire in a limited time period, but they should be considered if data logging is to be the form of collection.

AO3 requires candidates to create a spreadsheet and consider the most effective and easy-to-use interface to allow data to be added to the spreadsheet. At the higher levels this should include the creation of a form with a method of automatically inserting the data from the form, once completed, to the main data sheet. Depending on the version of spreadsheet software used this can be done through a Wizard or by recording a macro that inserts the data at the top of the data sheet and then blanks out the form ready for the next person. Methods of protecting the data from accidental and deliberate loss need to be considered at the higher levels. This should include passwords to open and to modify as well as protecting individual sheet content and workbook structure in a way that allows data to be added but which protects those aspects of the spreadsheet that do not need to be changed by a user.

Evidence for AO4 is enhanced if candidates provide access to the electronic spreadsheet file. This avoids the problem of trying to print sheets showing formulas in their entirety at a readable size.

In order to create appropriate charts in AO5 it is important for candidates to understand the difference between discrete and continuous data. It is expected that charts using data from more than one data set will be created, to allow different groups to be compared.

For AO6, candidates need to present their findings, considering whether these support or disprove the hypothesis. Some candidates have given explanations about what they had done in the task with insufficient information about the results of the analysis. At Distinction level, candidates are expected to show some understanding that their findings are likely to either support or undermine the hypothesis rather than either categorically proving or disproving it.

Unit 4

The quality and complexity of multimedia products produced by candidates has varied widely. Most have produced high quality products of an appropriate level, with a range of multimedia components and effects incorporated into a complex structure offering the user a variety of routes and a range of types of interactivity. However, in some cases the product has been over-simplistic, failing to meet the criteria at this level.

Centres are recommended to choose their software with care, as some offers a greater range of options for candidates to create interactive features.

It is important that candidates meet *all* of the criteria required for AO1. In some cases the unit had to be withdrawn because some elements, notably the scenario in which the product is to be used and/or the ways in which audience and purpose has influenced the choice of content and key features, have not been considered. It is important to consider the scenario in which the product is to be used (and distributed) as this will effect considerations such as number of screens, method of navigation and file size.

All candidates need to plan and implement at least one interactive element. This is *in addition to* hyperlinks that are needed in order to create multiple pathways through the product.

Timeline-based events, required at the higher levels, are those where screens progress or actions occur in timed sequence rather than by user choice and hyperlinks. Creating an animated element and including it within a screen/slide does not meet this requirement.

Optimisation is often poorly understood. There should be evidence that consideration has been given to the best balance between quality and file size, as well as to the most appropriate file type. Reference should be made at the higher levels to the scenario in which the product is to be used.

Where the design was sufficiently complex, the evidence provided for AO4 was usually good. Most centres have presented evidence for this AO electronically, which is appropriate. Additional documentation is often not needed for AO4 as the user guides produced for AO7 should provide sufficient guidance for assessors to find all the different elements.

Testing is often a weak area in this unit, with evidence failing to demonstrate that a range of aspects have been tested by the candidate. Although some improvements might be correction of faults, it is also expected that consideration will be given to ways in which the various aspects of the product could be improved to better meet the needs of the original brief.

User documentation for a multi-media product does not usually need to be lengthy but it should provide a complete overview of the product and its features. System requirements should consider the requirements of the software as well as the memory requirements of the product created and the hardware required to run it in the scenario outlined in AO1.

Optional units

Unit 5

Although the word 'spreadsheets' sometimes appears in the plural, the requirement in this unit is for candidates to create a complex spreadsheet solution to a problem. This solution should contain a number of linked sheets, which could be separate files or multiple sheets within the same file, according to the needs of the user and the design created by the candidate. Although the assessment requirement is for *at least two* linked sheets it is expected that many solutions will involve more than this minimum.

There is no need for centres to come up with contrived scenarios that require the full range of techniques available, including modelling, statistical analysis and filtering. However, the problem must be of sufficient complexity to require a solution that offers candidates the opportunity to demonstrate the range of different formula types required in AO2 and to evidence sufficient processing in AO3.

AO2 uses a number of terms which have been inconsistently interpreted. These are defined below:

- *Multiple sheet referencing* – This refers to a formula that includes references to cells from more than one sheet.
- *Multi-stage functions* – these are considered to be functions where the argument of a function is itself a function. Whilst these are often called 'nested functions', for the purpose of this AO the term *nested functions* is restricted to those where the argument of a function is the *same type* of function, eg a nested IF statement.

There is no requirement for candidates to carry out the whole range of types of processing listed in AO3. The guidance in the unit specification should be referred to. However, it is

important that the techniques used are the most *appropriate*. For example, if modelling is required then some use of the *goal seek* command would be expected. If data is to be analysed and presented statistically then the charts produced should be sufficient to provide information that is relevant and non-trivial, and should be appropriate to the type of data. Macros should carry out more than one function and should be appropriate to user needs.

Evidence for AOs 2 and 3 might be found within the technical documentation produced for AO4. However, candidates must make clear which part of their portfolio is the user documentation and which is the technical documentation, demonstrating a clear understanding of the differences between the two.

Candidates working at Distinction level in AO5 need to test their spreadsheet using 'a full range of acceptable and unacceptable input'. Candidates would benefit from learning about normal, abnormal and extreme test data, with the reasons for including these, so that they can incorporate the whole range into their plans.

AO6 requires candidates to evaluate their spreadsheet solution with reference to the user requirements. Although at Pass level this can be brief, it must be sufficient to be considered an evaluation.

Unit 6

The Entity Relationship Diagram produced for AO1 should use accepted conventions and not be merely a copy of the diagram shown by Microsoft Access. The normalisation process needs to be documented by the candidate.

It is not necessary to address the AOs in numerical order – these are arranged only for assessment purposes. It is expected that candidates will produce reports for the queries they create *before* creating the user interface. It is usual for the user interface to provide access to forms and reports. Additionally, it is likely that candidates will create the forms after setting up the structure of the tables, rather than leaving these until after queries have been created.

Unit 7

Candidates need to design and create a *set of* documents for an organisation, demonstrating a sound understanding of the application of house style across different types of document. As a Level 3 unit it is expected that candidates will produce something more substantial than that required at Level 2. Level 2 requires a publication with a size equivalent to at least 8 A4 pages. Level 3 requires a suite of publications, to show a consistent house style. It is therefore expected that between them they would cover the equivalent of at least 8 A4 sides, if not more. In order to demonstrate the range of tools and techniques available it would be good practice to include at least one substantial publication of, say 8 pages, and two or three additional publications. The substantial publication will allow candidates to demonstrate their skills with large amounts of text, and to make use of multiple master pages for front cover and inside pages, for example. The additional documents will allow candidates to demonstrate an understanding of the application of house style to documents of different sizes and layouts.

There is no requirement for any greater quantity at Merit or Distinction – the differentiation is on quality and range of techniques etc. However, since AO4 at Merit and Distinction level requires candidates to print out using crop marks then at least one non-standard-sized document should be included, otherwise the crop marks would be pointless.

Candidates need a clear brief that will allow them to create an original suite of documents. Good practice would be to supply candidates with some text and graphics to include, 'from the client' although if this is not possible they can simulate this by finding their own from

websites etc. At least some text and graphics should be original.

In AO1, there is no requirement for candidates to include copies of the publications they review, although this might be helpful to enable assessors to judge the depth and accuracy of research comments. However, candidates should include evaluative comments and explanations of how their research has affected their designs. The documents to be reviewed should cover a wide range of different types of publication. These might be provided for candidates working at Pass level, but above this level candidates should independently identify documents for study.

There are quite a few documents on the WWW that could be used to provide information about visual signposting. One such example can be found in the DTP section of www.about.com.

Candidates need to produce sketch diagrams for every page of their publications. To be considered 'detailed', as required for Merit and Distinction, these should specify the text and graphics to be included. This necessitates research to find appropriate text and graphics as well as deciding where any text and graphics provided by the client are to be located and any text and graphics that need to be created by the candidate. The source of graphics and text should be acknowledged, either within the publications themselves, as appropriate, or in a bibliography, which can be provided within the portfolio. The reference to AO6 in the notes for guidance within the unit is an error.

The sketch diagrams should provide all the information needed about house style, including colour scheme, fonts and any page layout issues, including use of lines, borders etc, that will be needed to create the templates in AO2.

AO2 requires candidates to create templates that include the settings required for each publication. At a minimum these should include a range of styles (not just one) that include all the aspects listed in the grading grid. The additional items required at Distinction level (colour scheme and grids/columns) would need to be set in the templates. The language used will be different according to the software used – in many cases these will be called style sheets. In Microsoft Publisher the styles will be set as text styles and additional features will need to be set in Master pages. Both of these will be saved in the templates. Although templates need to be created for each type of document, eg newsletter, report, brochure, these *may* be based on one master template, where the styles are set.

There is no need to put in any more detail of text/graphic frames than would be necessary to provide a blank template for all publications of the particular type – it should be noted that layout and frames are not included in the grading grid. However, it should also be noted that the list in the grading grid is a *minimum* and some layout will be necessary to provide standard items necessary for the house style, without which the templates are unlikely to be considered fit for purpose.

The Knowledge, Understanding and Skills (KUS) section of AO3 provides a long list of tools/facilities, from which we can consider what a 'limited range' and 'range' can be. Even a 'limited range' should use more than one feature from each section, including a range of formatting and layout options.

Automated tasks are listed in the KUS as including tables and bullets, but mail merge would be another good option. This does not have to be in a letter – a variety of details might be merged into newsletters, catalogues, invitations, menus etc. Where the software offers this facility a table of contents would be appropriate in a longer publication. Microsoft Publisher allows the creation of macros using the VB editor, so some automation of templates might be included, although this is not a requirement.

Candidates must produce clear evidence of the software features they have used, eg layout

guides (grids), styles, text flow and grouping. This might be achieved by providing the electronic file for each publication, with annotated printouts to show where the different features have been used. In *some* cases, eg layering, 'before' and 'after' screenshots might also be appropriate.

Colour separation printouts should be monochrome, as this is what is used to set the plates – what they need to show is the contrast on the particular colours.

Proof reading symbols should be generally recognised, using both text and marginal marks. Guidance on proof reading symbols can be found on

http://www.cse.dmu.ac.uk/~bstahl/CORRECTION_MARKS.pdf and

<http://www.journalismcareers.com/articles/downloads/proofreadingsymbols.pdf> Whilst it would not be expected that candidates will be unduly penalised for the occasional non-standard mark, it would be expected that there will be marks in the text and in the margins that are largely consistent with nationally recognised signs.

A suitable format for saving would be either pdf or by using pack and go (Microsoft Publisher) – essentially saving in a form that would allow the recipient to load it without the host application.

The report in AO5 would be expected to be more detailed than that provided by Level 2 candidates, who should demonstrate some understanding of the processes of spot printing, offset lithography and digital printing. At Merit and Distinction there should be evidence of some understanding of the purpose of the crop marks and the colour separation prints – how these relate to the final processes.

Accessibility options might most obviously include colour contrast with consideration for people with poor eyesight and/or colour blindness. Additional considerations might include font size and style. Also alternative formats. Some useful links, available at the time of writing this report, are:

http://www.rnib.org.uk/xpedio/groups/public/documents/publicwebsite/public_printdesign.hcs.p#P6_523

<http://www3.hants.gov.uk/logos/cx-logos-corporatestandards/cx-logos-accessforall/cx-logos-accessforblind.htm>

<http://www.artsanddisability.com/improving-access/blind.aspx>

Legislative constraints are most obviously related to copyright law. However, there might also be cases where other legislation, including DPA, trades descriptions, libel and obscene publications, might be considered. Candidates should demonstrate a basic appreciation of legislation relating to printed publications as well as considering ways in which this legislation affects their own publications.

Unit 8

Centres should note that it is not possible to claim both units 8 and 9 for the National Certificate (6-unit qualification) but they can both be included in either of the larger qualifications, the National Diploma and the National Extended Diploma.

It is important to note that the work for this unit should be met by focusing on *one* IT sector. The KUS section of the unit specification lists a large number of sectors that might be considered, although this is not an exhaustive list.

In AO2 it is important, even at Pass level, for candidates to identify information on more than one job role within the chosen sector.

Evidence for AO6 has been very well presented by some candidates in the form of a video of an interview. If this approach is taken it would be advisable to edit the video or only record parts of the interview to ensure the video is not too long for the moderator to sit and view.

Good practice seen has included the use of people from outside the school environment, including parents, governors and representatives from linked businesses, to conduct these interviews.

Unit 10

This unit requires appropriate digital hardware and software resources but where these are in place this is becoming a popular unit. Although the type of camera is not specified, most centres are giving candidates access to DSLR cameras as well as simple compact cameras. This has given candidates a broad experience and is good practice.

AO2 and some parts of AO1 require candidates to demonstrate understanding, which is generally evidenced through written reports. It is essential that candidates do not merely copy and paste text from websites here.

AO3 requires candidates to source images. To gain a Pass in this AO it is important that there is evidence that these images, as well as the candidates' own images have been *manipulated* in AOs 4 and 5, although there is no requirement for them to be *combined* until Distinction in AO5.

Unit 11

Some imaginative videos have been produced for this unit, which has been clearly enjoyed by candidates. In some cases the supporting documentation has not been completed to the same high level.

AO1 requires candidates to review at least two different videos. Suitable types of video are listed in the KUS. Whilst the guidance makes it clear that a range of types should be studied as part of the learning for the unit it is not necessary for the videos reviewed as part of this AO to be from different categories. Indeed, choosing different videos from the same category as the product to be created might be seen as more purposeful.

Candidates are required to support their descriptions with examples. These should be specific examples that illustrate their description. This is most likely to include some stills from the video to show where the specific content/effects etc can be found.

There is some repetition in the last sentence of the grading requirements for AO1 at Merit and Distinction. At Pass level candidates need to describe features and then make a brief comment on their effect/appropriateness etc, whilst at the higher levels the amount of detail in both description and comment will be increased. However, if they do discuss positive aspects and identify weaknesses then this will include references to specific content and conventions, so the last statement is effectively redundant.

Although additional components sourced in AO3 might not all be created by the candidate, some original video footage is required in AO2.

It is important for centre assessors to be vigilant when assessing AO5, to ensure credit is only given to candidates' own work.

Unit 12

As for Unit 11, final products of a very high quality have been produced but this quality has not always been matched by the supporting documentation, in particular timelines and storyboards.

The focus of this unit needs to be carefully considered. Where the product to be created is the soundtrack to original video footage, this works well. In some cases centres have asked

candidates to provide alternative soundtracks to professional video clips. This has proved more problematic, where candidates have tried to improve on professional sound tracks and have, in some cases, been unable to avoid replicating much of the original.

Reference to *equipment* in AO3 refers to both hardware and software. The KUS lists the techniques that candidates should be taught in order to create their sound tracks.

Unit 14

The unit guidance states that '*This unit has adopted a broad approach to cartooning. Candidates may work in any format from computer 3D model animation to simple frame-by-frame animation. It is important that candidates demonstrate an ability to characterise and develop characters so that they tell stories.*' Although the examples given above are both computer based, the ethos is clearly broad. Some centres have expressed an interest in developing this unit through stop-frame animation, which is within the broad approach defined above. However, AO5 requires some evidence of ICT tools to create/edit graphics, in order to create the filmstrip and any stop-frame approach needs to take account of this requirement, which might be evidenced through editing of photographs from a stop-frame animation. It is also important that the animated film uses the character developed in AO4. Whilst in most cases this character will be drawn, with the final drawings created using computer software, the assessment objectives could equally well be met by clay or by editing photographs. Simply animating existing 'real life' objects would not meet this objective.

Unit 16

It is expected that most centres will choose this unit because it is an area of interest/expertise for at least one member of staff. Therefore it is likely that they will be able to provide candidates with code for simple games to illustrate the different programming principles required in AO1. Open-source games can also be used.

Although views on good programming practices vary, issues such as clarity/ readability and efficiency, making code easy to follow/ debug and develop are generally agreed. Recognisable variable names and the use of loops, procedures and functions rather than repetition of code would be areas to consider. In most high-level languages indenting loops for clarity and inclusion of comments would also be appropriate.

Unit 20

Evidence for the website created as part of this unit has been successfully provided electronically with clear signposting to show where specific items of evidence can be found.

AO6 requires candidates to investigate the processes involved in uploading a website. The reference to ISPs in the grading grid should be read as web hosting services.

There is a contradiction between the grading grid and the guidance in relation to the actual uploading of a website to the internet. Centres should follow the *guidance*, which states that at Pass and Merit it is sufficient for candidates to *know about* the processes involved in uploading a website. Only at Distinction level will they be required to actually upload their site. Although they will have chosen an appropriate and available domain name and hosting service it will be acceptable if practical constraints prevent them from using either or both of these when they actually upload their site.

It is important that the evaluation in AO7 is assessed in the context of a Level 3 unit. Over-brief and superficial comments should not be credited.

Unit 24

This unit requires candidates to undertake a significant amount of research. Consequently centres need to be vigilant to ensure that if material is taken from a 3rd party source then it must be clearly referenced with some explanation/ description from the student.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Delivery

It is important that sufficient time is allocated to the delivery and assessment of this qualification. Centres are reminded that 60 guided learning hours (hours of taught and directed time) are recommended for each unit.

Assessment

All teachers need access to the complete unit specification for units they are delivering. Problems have occurred in some centres where teachers have tried to work only from the grading grid, without access to the Knowledge, Understanding and Skills (KUS) and the Guidance sections, which in many cases clarify the areas to be covered. As unit specifications, including assessment requirements, are downloadable from the open section of the OCR website they are not confidential and may be provided to candidates. However, although exemplar portfolios are also available, these have been provided to give centres some idea of what a completed portfolio might look like, and providing these to candidates is not good practice, as it can restrict creativity and has occasionally led to candidates simply copying from the examples, which is unacceptable.