



Chief Co-ordinator's Annual Report

OCR Nationals in ICT **September 2009 – August 2010**

OCR Level 1 First Award in ICT
OCR Level 1 Award in ICT
OCR Level 1 Certificate in ICT

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

CENTRE PRACTICE

Introduction

The OCR Nationals in ICT at Level 2 is a highly popular qualification which seeks to provide a challenging and accessible opportunity for candidates to demonstrate their skills, knowledge and understanding of ICT in a vocational context. It has the largest entry of any Level 2 ICT qualification, and is continuing to grow rapidly. It offers a wide range of different types of units, including multimedia units. Whilst the Level 1 qualification attracts much smaller numbers it is used in a wide variety of environments where it provides a challenging and rewarding qualification for many candidates.

Delivery methods

- General
 - some centres enter entire cohorts for the Level 2 qualification. In some cases this works well, with the approach of the Nationals allowing candidates to achieve beyond what might have been expected in a more traditional qualification. However, some centres have found that a number of candidates have failed to complete sufficient work to the required standard to achieve a full Level 2 qualification. Other centres have entered candidates more appropriately for the Level 1 qualification, where they have been able to excel and achieve grades appropriate for their abilities.
 - centres use a wide range of delivery models, according to their individual situations. Many begin the course in KS3, with some submitting at least one unit for moderation at this time and others completing portfolios in KS4. Many centres have mapped the functional skills requirements against Nationals units. Many have also mapped the Key Stage 3 levels against various elements of the Level 2 units – particularly Unit 1.

- most centres have started by delivering Unit 1, the mandatory unit, then moving onto specialist units, often selected by the centre for all the candidates to study. Others begin with a 30glh unit before moving onto Unit 1. A few centres successfully provide opportunities for candidates to make their own choices of units.
- in most centres the entire course is delivered by the ICT department, often supplemented by teachers from other areas. Some centres have allocated particular units to other departments.
- in some centres candidates are taught by several members of staff for a particular unit. Where this occurs it is important that one member of staff takes responsibility for awarding the final grade for the unit and that the name of that member of staff is recorded on the e-claim. It may be possible to allocate particular candidates to different members of staff for this purpose, to share the workload.
- some centres allocate particular units to teaching staff, allowing them to develop expertise in a few units, whilst in most centres candidates work with the same member of staff for all their units. Both models have been found to work well, where they are suitable for the centre.
- a number of centres concentrate their efforts in achieving Pass level only, which potentially limits those candidates who have the capability of achieving a higher standard of work, even if only in some Assessment Objectives. Some centres have developed target strategies to enable their candidates to achieve the higher levels in the final qualification with the least amount of work possible. This practice is not encouraged by OCR, and it should be noted that should a moderator disagree with any assessment decision for such centres the effect on final candidate achievements can be very significant.
- centres who deliver this course successfully generally demonstrate a high level of planning and co-operation between staff involved with the course.
- occasionally the work of candidates for some units has many similarities, suggesting that teachers are offering more specific guidance than allowed by the specification. It is important that all work submitted is demonstrably that of the candidate concerned. Centres are reminded of the requirement for all assessors to sign a Centre Authentication Form (CAF) before each moderation visit, attesting that the work submitted by each candidate is their own.
- a significant number of centres provide templates/writing frames for candidates to complete. Whilst this can be very successful in aiding candidates to produce detailed work with a good coverage of requirements this is often dependent upon the format of the template. Where they are in the form of tables, candidates are often subconsciously restricted in the amount they write by the space available, often most obviously indicated by the width of columns. At times the use of writing frames places restrictions on higher-ability candidates, limiting the extent to which they can demonstrate their ability. In addition there are some examples of writing frames and templates which go beyond acceptable content and give too much teacher guidance. These are considered malpractice.
- OCR model assignments
- many centres use the OCR model assignments as these have been developed and thoroughly checked to ensure they fully meet the assessment criteria. Centres using these assignments are generally successful, providing they assess the work using the assessment evidence grid from the unit. The candidate checklist at the end of the model assignment is to help candidates compile their portfolios and must not be used as an assessment tool. Use of the checklist is not compulsory.
- Many assignments can be easily adapted to change the focus/brief to make it more appropriate for candidates in a particular centre.

- Centres must ensure they download and use the most up-to date assignments from the OCR website to ensure full coverage of the unit specification.
- Centre-based assignments
 - centres not using OCR model assignments have often devised ones of their own, many of which are excellent, enabling their candidates to provide good evidence to show that they have met the criteria in the assessment evidence grid, within an appropriate and motivating context. However, care must be taken to ensure all criteria are addressed and that there is sufficient scope for candidates to reach the higher grades.
 - assignments are presented to candidates in a variety of ways, both paper-based and electronic.
 - some centres have produced integrated assignments to enable their candidates to produce evidence for more than one unit at a time. Whilst this can be successful, great care needs to be given to the assignment wording, and to monitoring and support, as candidates in some centres have found this approach confusing, with a negative effect on the evidence produced.
 - many centres share work that they have developed, through the OCR e-community and using local links.
 - a small number of centres have linked with local businesses to develop assignments where candidates produce a product to support the business. This approach has generally been very successful giving the candidates a clear business focus and resulting in some very good quality work.
- Commercial resources
 - a range of commercial resources, in book form, downloadable files and integrated electronic course materials are available and are in evidence in use in centres. Where these are used to support, rather than to replace the work of the teacher they are most successful. As with centre-devised materials, care must be taken to ensure any assignments designed to produce portfolios for assessment fully meet all criteria and do not over-direct candidates.
 - the number of centres making substantial use of commercial resources is declining. Many comment that they used them in the beginning but as they have more confidence, they do not need to rely on them as much as in previous years.
- Internal moderation
 - internal moderation is a course requirement not an option.
 - the amount and efficacy of internal moderation carried out by centres continues to vary. Where it is carried out thoroughly and rigorously, external moderation is most likely to be successful in confirming the grades awarded to candidates. Where the process is less effective it is not uncommon for visiting moderators to find differences in standards between different assessors, and this can lead to problems during a moderation visit, often lengthening the visit and usually resulting in the withdrawal of at least some candidates' claims, sometimes the entire unit.
 - in many centres there is a good system of internal moderation, with records clearly showing which units were moderated by whom, the outcomes achieved and any resulting actions.
 - best practice is often found when teachers work closely together and discuss portfolio work in progress, as well as carrying out formal moderation of completed portfolios. In some centres it is valued as an effective management tool to improve team cohesion, improve individual performance and for sharing good practice within the department.

- in some centres internal moderation is carried out by the lead assessor whilst some involve the whole department. Where the former method is used it is important that there is some procedure to moderate the assessment of the lead assessor. Where the latter model is used it is often seen to be most helpful in developing an agreed standard between all staff, but where there is any disagreement there needs to be an effective method of resolution, which often involves reference to the lead assessor. There have been a few instances of centres submitting grades that have not been agreed, in the expectation that the visiting moderator will be able to make the decision. This is not an acceptable strategy, as it can lead to the withdrawal of an entire unit if standards are found to be inconsistent.
- Assessment
 - where centres use the assessment evidence grid at the end of each unit specification the accuracy of assessment is generally sound, although there have been cases of over-generosity, often where centre staff know that some candidates are ‘better’ than others, although the evidence in their portfolio does not sufficiently meet the requirements of the higher grades.
 - Where leniency is evident, this is often as a result of the inappropriate application of ‘best fit’. A Pass grade can only be awarded for an Assessment Objective when ALL the Pass criteria have been met. The assessor should then consider what elements of the Merit and Distinction grade descriptors have been met. It is important at this stage of assessment to look carefully at the difference between the three grade levels. Where a significant element of differentiation between the levels is not met, even in part, then the higher level cannot be considered to be the best fit.
 - in some centres assessment has not paid sufficient attention to detail, with units having to be withdrawn because evidence for Pass criteria cannot be found by the moderator.
 - generosity is also noted in some centres where credit is sometimes given to candidates because they have completed a task, regardless of the quality of their response. This is particularly evident where centres use tick box monitoring sheets.
 - in some centres reliance on a spreadsheet to calculate the final grade has led to discrepancies, particularly where ‘best fit’ has been applied to most or all AOs and the quality of the portfolio overall has not been taken into account. It is essential that the final grade awarded for each AO, and for the unit as a whole, is a result of a professional judgement and not a rigid algorithm.
- Evidence
 - clearly presented portfolios and annotations from internal assessors have aided the moderation process in many centres. Whilst most centres produce paper-based portfolios, a growing number of centres are opting for submitting evidence electronically, reducing the paper load. Where this has been well planned it has been successful, but in some cases it has caused moderators difficulties locating specific evidence, often giving little or no indication of the location and/or names of files needed or the order in which they should be viewed. In some cases some evidence was missing on the day of moderation, leading to the withdrawal of units.
 - it is frequently the case that centres are providing paper-based evidence for some elements of units, with electronic files to demonstrate the final products created. This makes moderation more effective. Examples of units where this is often useful are – Units 2, 3, 4, 6, 20, 21, 22 and 23.
 - in units where planning is an AO, centres must ensure that this is completed prior to the development of the product, therefore it is inappropriate for the planning AO to include screenshots of the final product.

- a few centres still encourage their candidates to produce large amounts of screenshot evidence showing the process of achieving a particular outcome, rather than clear evidence that the outcome has been achieved. 'Before' and 'after' screenshots are often sufficient.
- Occasionally difficulties have been encountered where the format of evidence has prevented the assessment of particular criteria, for example the presentation of monochrome printouts where the use of colour needs to be assessed or reliance upon screenshots printed out at such low resolution, over-cropped or at such a small size that significant details could not be seen.
- some moderation visits have been hindered by technical problems such as the supplied electronic evidence not being viewable to a lack of appropriate software. If evidence cannot be accessed by the visiting moderator a visit might have to be abandoned.
- Interchange:
 - the interchange system has relieved centres and moderators from the need to complete large amounts of paperwork. Most centres have encountered little difficulty in learning to use the system, finding the handbook for centres very clear. Additionally, many have used the services of the CAST team at OCR, who have been available to help them deal with any difficulties encountered with the system.
 - some difficulties have been encountered with Interchange, especially in the first part of the year, when the teacher assessing the work was not accurately entered in the claim. In addition, many centres reported difficulties in correcting errors which they had inadvertently entered into the online system.
 - some centres entered 'predicted grades' rather than the final grade on the e-claim, others allowed candidates to continue to work on the units after the grade had been submitted. This is completely unacceptable. In many cases this led to the withdrawal of the entire unit. A grade should only be entered on the e-claim when the work has been fully completed, assessed and internally moderated. No changes may be made to the work once the grade has been entered.
- Moderation visits:
 - although the moderation visit is often anticipated with some trepidation, particularly at first, most centres value the visiting moderation model, which provides immediate feedback and enables centre staff to discuss and clarify any problems, increasing their confidence in delivery and assessment and enabling them to move forward and raise standards.
 - centres are advised to plan and book their visits early in the year. June/July is a very busy period; failing to book a visit in good time often results in the preferred date not being available.

Comments on the Units

- Level 1 Unit 1
 - most centres have used the OCR Model Assignment for this unit
 - it is essential that clear evidence is provided for all criteria. In the case of using a user name and password to access a computer this is most likely to be in the form of a witness statement. Where candidates achieve Distinction level in AO1 the fact that file names and locations have been assessed as mostly appropriate also needs to be clearly evidenced.
 - where candidates enter a URL to find a website this must be clearly evidenced. The model assignment emphasises the fact that the candidates must enter the URL and not simply click on a link, so sending this URL via an email message is not acceptable.

- for Merit in AO2 it is important that a moderator can clearly see that text and/or images have been copied from the internet. If the candidate does not annotate this the assessor might do so. Similarly, where a record has been edited in AO7 it would be helpful if this was highlighted by either candidate or assessor.
- evidence of formatting text in a presentation needs to be clear before a Merit can be awarded in AO4. This is likely to be 'before' and 'after' printouts/screenshots unless the style used is clearly not the default or retained from a copied source.
- the higher levels of AO4 require clear evidence of resizing graphics and/or formatting text. This is most likely to be provided through 'before' and 'after' printouts. The same applies to the use of formatting in AO5.
- it is worth noting that over-reliance on WordArt in AOs 4 and 5 can prevent candidates evidencing the use of text formatting features.
- the extent to which the content of the documents has been provided by the centre must be made clear.
- the requirement at the higher levels of AO6 to print the spreadsheet is not met by screen prints.
- the new row of data required in AO6 can just be added to the end, it does not have to be inserted. However, ALL candidates MUST make at least one change to existing data and at the higher levels they must note the results.
- it is important that the extent to which changes made in AO7 are accurate is specifically assessed. This includes the correct use of upper/lower case.
- candidates working at the higher levels of AO7 need to show that they can edit an existing query, both by editing the search criterion and by adding a new search criterion in a different field.
- Level 1 Unit 2
 - most centres have used the OCR Model assignment for this unit.
 - some centres use non-specialist software for this unit; where this is practised, centres must ensure candidates export/save their work as web pages (html) to ensure they meet the requirements of this unit. Failure to do this will result in the withdrawal of the unit.
 - some centres have required candidates to evaluate rather than identify different features of websites for AO1. Whilst this is a more demanding activity, it can lead to candidates failing to meet the assessment requirements for this AO.
 - candidates working at this level, with fewer technical requirements than at Level 2, have often been able to produce high quality multimedia websites.
 - some centres misinterpreted the range of components to be included on the plan and website in AOs 2-4. These are the multimedia components text, graphics, sound, animation and video.
 - at Merit level for AO2 plans should show some detail. It would be expected at a minimum at this level that the titles of the pages will be included in the plans as well as some thought about the content of images and text on each page.
 - candidates working at Distinction level should clearly show how they have used both text and graphics as hyperlinks between pages. This is often seen on commercial pages as text links at the bottom of each page in addition to the graphical navigation bar. Alternatively, candidates might add a 'home' text link to each page.
 - candidates working above Pass level in AO3 are required to source at least one component independently. Some verification of this is required from the internal assessor.

- AO6 requires candidates to look at the feedback they have received and make their own suggestions for improvements. Although these may be taken from the reviews, it is not sufficient just to include reviewers' comments on their own.
- to gain a level above Pass in AO5 candidates must show that they have specifically tested external links and/or email links.
- Level 2 Unit 1
 - standards and assessment for this unit have improved from earlier years. Areas that still cause some problems include areas of AO2 and AO4. The main problem areas in AO2 are the quality of search criteria, suitability of emails (the inclusion of emails from non-business contexts), the need to comment on the risks of opening and receiving email attachments, not the general risks when using the internet, and the level of understanding of trustworthiness and copyright. In AO4 the quality of the business documents produced is the most common problem. The fact that many centres complete this unit in KS3 can be seen as a contributory factor here.
 - some centres have misinterpreted some of the requirements and some experience difficulties caused by network restrictions. Attention is drawn to the 'Common Issues with Unit 1' document that is on the OCR website.
 - vigilance is required in this unit to ensure candidates' comments on copyright and on the risks of receiving and opening email attachments are their own work and not simply copied from websites.
- Level 2 Unit 2
 - this is a very popular unit which offers opportunities for the use of products created in other units. Some excellent work has been seen in many centres. Many centres allow candidates to produce a website on a topic that is of interest to them; this appears to increase motivation which is reflected in the quality of the work.
 - evidence is generally good where centres provide the completed websites in electronic form to supplement printed portfolios. There have been some instances where moderators have experienced difficulty finding specific items within the site, but where these have been clearly referenced this has not been a problem.
 - weaknesses are sometimes observed in AO1, where the audience might not be clearly identified. Additionally, the requirement for plans at Merit to include more than one way to link the pages is often ignored by centres. There remains a problem in some centres that page plans are completed retrospectively, which is extremely poor practice and can lead to the withdrawal of units at moderation.
 - where centres provide only paper-based evidence, there was sometimes insufficient evidence of the links in AO3 and/or the interactive elements in AO4 resulting in the withdrawal of the unit.
 - testing is often quite vague, with candidates being awarded levels over-generously when they have tested only a small range of aspects of their website, eg links. Centres should refer to the KUS when deciding whether or not most areas of the website have been tested.
 - AO7 remains an area that has led to the withdrawal of units at moderation, with some centres continuing to award a level where candidates have not considered their own strengths and weaknesses in addition to those of the website they have created.
- Level 2 Unit 3
 - a clear brief is key to success in this unit and many centres successfully use the OCR model assignment.
 - care is needed in AO1 to ensure candidates focus on the graphics rather than the entire items containing/displaying them.

- a small number of centres continue to use software which greatly limits the tools that candidates can use in the creation of their graphics. Appropriate software is necessary to allow candidates to demonstrate the use of both bitmap and vector tools at some level of complexity. Some centres use more than one piece of software to evidence this unit, which is a suitable way of ensuring a range of different tools are used.
- a small number of centres have successfully delivered this unit through the Design Technology curriculum with candidates making a mock-up of the final product on which the graphics were displayed as part evidence for AO6.
- Level 2 Unit 4
 - this is a popular unit, generally successfully delivered and enjoyed by candidates. Some very good, creative multimedia products have been produced, usually using MS PowerPoint, but other software, notably Mediator and Flash, is also used in a number of centres, to good effect.
 - where problems are encountered it is often because candidates do not provide evidence that they have stored the files they source in AO3, additionally some have failed to evidence sourcing and using sound, video and animation elements (files) distinct from either custom animations and sound effects available within the multimedia software, which should be assessed as multimedia effects.
 - electronic evidence of the final product is valued by moderators, although centres need to take care that all components, especially sound and video, can be viewed by the moderator. Where candidates use MS PowerPoint a solution to this may be best achieved by using the 'Pack and Go' / 'Package to CD' option, which generates a single folder containing all the required elements.
 - in some cases units have been withdrawn by a visiting moderator because candidates have failed to make their own suggestions for improvements in AO5. Whilst it is expected that candidates will use their feedback to provide ideas it is not sufficient just to include peer feedback without any comment from the candidates themselves.
- Level 2 Unit 5
 - publications of varying quality have been produced for this unit, from detailed magazines that would not look out of place in the 'real world' to very poor documents with very little content on each page. It is important that candidates, even at Pass level, produce a publication that is equivalent to eight A4 pages, rather than pages that would be better reduced to A5 or smaller.
 - there continue to be some problems seen in AO2, where centres misinterpret styles for designs, rather than generating styles within the software for use in the publication.
 - the commercial processes described must relate to producing the publication the candidate has created, it is not acceptable for candidates to simply copy and paste material from the internet to meet this requirement.
- Level 2 Unit 6
 - centres submitting this unit have generally done it very well. However the evidence from AO1 is often weak, with sketches being presented rather than full plans showing formulae and formatting.
 - centres often report that their students enjoy the challenge of this unit and it is not uncommon to see very complex spreadsheet solutions produced.
 - difficulty is sometimes encountered where candidates present paper-based evidence containing printouts/screenshots that do not display formulae in full and/or are too small to be easily read. Provision of the electronic file usually aids moderation, especially where candidates provide guidance to show where particular features can be seen.

- higher grades are frequently awarded over-generously in AO5, where the type of chart is not appropriate for the type of data, ie the use of line graphs for discrete data. Additionally the requirement at the higher levels for a chart that compares values from two or more different data series is sometimes not understood.
- Level 2 Unit 7
 - where centres attempt this unit they generally do so successfully, with planning well evidenced and suitable databases produced. Problems have been found in a small number of centres where teachers have been less secure about the basic principles of relational databases, leading to confusion for candidates and ineffective products caused by inappropriate relationships.
 - in AO3 the purpose of the query is not always clearly evidenced, particularly by Pass level candidates.
 - the requirement to use a range of different report types in AO4 is sometimes missed by centres.
 - testing is sometimes assessed over-generously where candidates appear to carry out a large number of tests, but this is achieved only by repetition of sometimes trivial tests without ensuring all areas of the database are tested with a range of data to ensure appropriate results are produced.
- Level 2 Unit 8
 - many centres recognise this unit as an ideal extension activity for many of their students, with candidates frequently completing it as an additional unit outside normal curriculum time. It is, therefore, very important that centres are vigilant when assessing work from this unit that they do not accept work that has simply been copied and pasted from websites or work that has been copied from other students.
 - it is somewhat disappointing that centres/candidates are failing to take the opportunity to explore the latest developments, with devices such as mobile telephones still featuring in AO1.
 - some centres have produced good quality portfolios for this unit in the form of multimedia presentations as opposed to a large number of written reports.
- Level 2 Unit 11
 - few centres have attempted this unit, which offers candidates opportunity for original research.
- Level 2 Unit 12
 - this unit is not offered by many centres. It needs to be completed within the context of external, work experience placements that offer opportunities for all Assessment Objectives to be addressed, including planning tasks as part of a team. Where it has been successful the work experience and the unit each give candidates a better understanding of the other.
- Level 2 Unit 13
 - this unit requires candidates to have access to configuration settings of operating systems and applications software. Where centres have been able to provide these the unit has often been enjoyed by candidates and completed successfully.
 - some problems have been encountered due to over-direction by a centre's assignment. Candidates need to make their own choices of hardware needed in AO1, according to the needs of the user. Similarly, in AOs 3 and 4 the differentiation is not only on the number of configuration changes made but also their appropriateness for the user's needs.
 - a clear understanding of user needs is key to success in this unit.
- Level 2 Unit 16
 - there is some evidence of this unit being completed with small numbers of candidates working with technicians.

- Level 2 Unit 17
 - this unit has sometimes been delivered by the Technology department, in which case it is important to ensure that internal moderation is carried out effectively to ensure standards are the same for this unit as for any others submitted.
 - it is essential that the evidence produced is sufficient for a moderator to verify the achievement of criteria. This is especially true of the net, where a poor quality output can suggest that the net is not accurate, even though it was created with accurate measurements on a grid.
- Level 2 Unit 19
 - this unit is completed by only a few centres, usually in conjunction with, or by, the Science department.
 - where it has been completed, candidates enjoy the unit and the work produced shows that they understand the process very well.
 - the evaluation in AO4 is often the weakest area with a lack of a scientific focus on issues such as accuracy, reliability and Health & Safety.
- Level 2 Unit 20
 - this continues to be a popular unit, with many imaginative animations seen.
 - although not a specification requirement, it would be beneficial to candidates if they could review animations which have some relevance to the product they will be creating.
 - most centres provide evidence of the completed animation in electronic form – this is helpful to both the moderator and to candidates as it reduces the need to evidence skills through the use of screenshots.
 - some centres provide too much guidance to candidates during testing. Candidates are required to decide for themselves how they are going to test their product and the grade should depend, in part, on the appropriateness of the testing undertaken by the candidate. Test plans should show that candidates have considered tests that are specifically designed for their own product.
- Level 2 Unit 21
 - this is a very popular unit with many candidates using the products created for this unit as part of the website created for unit 2.
 - the evidence for AO1 should be based on the items of ‘web furniture’ listed in the specification and not on other features of the websites used (such as multimedia content).
 - to meet the evidence requirements for AO2 candidates must clearly state the purpose and audience for their graphics. Whilst the audience is likely to be the same for all their graphics the purpose of each one must be separately stated.
 - it is essential that the ‘buttons’ created in AO4 are separate to the navigation bar created in AO3.
 - centres are reminded that a significant part of the grading requirement at Merit and Distinction is that the products created are fit for purpose and audience.
 - many candidates now present their work in AO6 in a ‘mock-up’ web-page rather than a slide-presentation. This has the benefit of enabling the client (and the moderator) to see the products in a web-environment so the any interactive features are working. This in turn helps to reduce the amount of screenshot evidence needed for AOs 3-5.
 - AO6 is frequently over-generously assessed at the higher levels, for which candidates must provide clear evidence of the consideration of appropriate file types, and (for Distinction) optimisation of the graphics.

- Level 2 Unit 22
 - this unit, although not as popular as units 20 and 23, shares similar issues with these two units
 - although not a requirement, it would be beneficial to candidates if they could review sound clips which have some relevance to the product they will be creating.
 - most centres provide evidence of the completed sound clip in electronic form – this is helpful to both the moderator and to candidates as it reduces the need to evidence skills through the use of screenshots.
 - some centres provide too much guidance to candidates during testing. Candidates are required to decide for themselves how they are going to test their product and the grade should depend, in part, on the appropriateness of the testing undertaken by the candidate. Test plans should show that candidates have considered tests that are specifically designed for their own product.
- Level 2 Unit 23
 - this is a popular unit, with some imaginative work seen by moderators.
 - candidates appear to perform best if they are given some choice over the product to be made and the intended audience.
 - although not a requirement, it would be beneficial to candidates if they could review video clips which have some relevance to the product they will be creating.
 - it is a requirement that the video clip includes at least some motion content. It is not appropriate that the whole clip consists of still images supported by a soundtrack.
 - Some centres provide a bank of clips for candidates to use; it is recommended that these clips should require some editing by candidates to be useable (for example they could include some 'camera shake' which would need to be cut from the clip).
 - most centres provide evidence of the completed video in electronic form – this is helpful to both the moderator and to candidates as it reduces the need to evidence skills through the use of screenshots.
 - some centres provide too much guidance to candidates during testing. Candidates are required to decide for themselves how they are going to test their product and the grade should depend, in part, on the appropriateness of the testing undertaken by the candidate. Test plans should show that candidates have considered tests that are specifically designed for their own product.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Delivery

- General
 - the content of the Knowledge, Understanding and Skills for a unit should be taught before any assessment is attempted.
 - ensure able candidates are given sufficient opportunity and encouragement to achieve the higher levels by producing high quality work which is not restricted to Pass criteria.
 - consider carefully the use of templates/writing frames, to ensure they do not restrict candidates or over-direct them.
- OCR Model assignments
 - consider these when preparing to deliver and assess a unit, as they exemplify the level of guidance that is appropriate to give to candidates.
 - do not use the candidate checklist for assessment purposes – use only the assessment evidence grid from the unit specification document.

- Centre-based assignments
 - check any assignment carefully to ensure it will allow candidates to produce clear evidence to meet all criteria.
 - do not produce new tick-box sheets for final assessment, always use the assessment evidence grid from the unit specification document.
- Commercial resources
 - use of any commercial resource does not remove the responsibility from the centre of ensuring full coverage of the Knowledge, Understanding and Skills, also that the work produced by their candidates fully meets the assessment requirements of each unit.
- Internal moderation
 - internal moderation must be carried out before submitting grade claims prior to each moderation visit and must include all units, all levels and all assessors. It is recommended that borderline portfolios are considered as part of the internal moderation process, as these help a centre in the development of agreed standards.
 - any internal moderation process needs to include a system of feedback to assessors, with agreed procedures for dealing with any problems. In some cases assessors misunderstood the purpose of internal moderation and simply ensured the individual candidate seen added any required additional evidence, rather than reassessing all the work to find any other instances of the problem.
 - it is important to note that some process of internal moderation, to confirm standards, is in place in all centres, even where there is only one assessor. In such cases a member of the Senior Management Team or another department might consider the work, to ensure there is clear evidence for all criteria claimed. Often, another teacher who is familiar with assessing vocational qualifications is in a good position to be able to support the assessment of a single teacher/assessor.
- Interchange:
 - it is vitally important that checks are made on the entries before a claim is submitted. It is not possible for either a centre or a moderator to edit the results of individual candidates once the claim has been submitted. This is necessary to protect the integrity of the data. However, it does mean that if errors are made the only solution is for a moderator to withdraw a group of candidates and for the centre to build a new claim. Centres are strongly urged to save and print claims, then check the printouts carefully to ensure no errors are present before pressing the 'submit' button.
 - it is important that every claim correctly shows which teacher has assessed which unit for each candidate.
 - although multiple claims can be made for a moderation visit this creates extra work for the moderator. Therefore, centres are requested not to submit their claims until all candidates for a qualification have been entered.
 - centres are reminded that they are expected to submit their claims a minimum of two weeks before the moderation visit. The claims must show the final, marked and internally moderated levels awarded for each unit and NOT expected grades. The two week time period is to allow the moderator time to select the sample in time for the visit, rather than to allow centres two weeks to prepare the samples. As the work of all candidates needs to be marked, internally moderated and available on the day of moderation it is not expected that centres will require more than a few days' notice of the required sample, to allow portfolios to be physically gathered together and electronic files organised for the moderator.

- a small number of centres had to request an additional moderation visit at the end of the year because they discovered candidates whose results had not been entered onto a claim. As most centres wisely use their two allocated free visits, this additional visit incurred a charge, in addition to the inconvenience to both centre and moderator of arranging an additional day for moderation, often at very short notice. This highlights the need for centres to keep accurate records of candidate achievement, including whether or not the unit has been certificated. OCR can confirm that all moderation must be carried out in the context of a moderation visit and that there will be no exceptions made to this procedure.
- Moderation visits:
 - most centres now ensure that a completed Centre Authentication Form and records of internal moderation are available to the moderator at the start of a visit. However, this is not universal and all centres are reminded that this is a requirement.
 - internal moderation must be carried out prior to finalising any grades awarded. Records should show the candidate name and unit for each portfolio moderated, along with the date of moderation, the name of the original assessor, who moderated the work, the outcome of moderation and any actions taken as a result of the moderation. It is important to ensure that if there is any disagreement, any remedial action applies to the whole cohort and not just the individual candidate whose work was moderated.
 - visits can be arranged during school days or at weekends/during holidays, with the agreement of both centre and moderator.
 - centres are strongly advised to use their entitlement of two free moderation visits per year. This allows some moderation to take place in the early part of the year, providing feedback and advice, as well as accrediting units before the end of the year, which provides encouragement and motivation for many candidates. Where centres have left moderation until the end of the year, problems have sometimes occurred if standards cannot be agreed by the moderator. However, where moderation takes place early in the course such a situation does not cause significant problems for centres or candidates. Moderator's diaries can fill up quickly and centres are strongly recommended to book visits as early as possible, especially if these are to be requested during the busy part of the year, which generally starts after the February half-term holiday.
 - a number of visits were postponed by the centre at very short notice. Whilst there are circumstances that could make this inevitable, it can cause severe problems for moderators and centres are requested to avoid such changes if at all possible.
 - although it is not a requirement for centres to provide electronic files during visiting moderation, moderation has been aided where electronic files have been provided, especially for Units 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 17, 18, 20, 21, 22 and 23. However, where evidence is provided in this way it is essential that the files are the most up to date and that they match any paper-based evidence provided. Centres are required to provide the moderator with appropriate facilities to view the files provided, including the appropriate version of any software required, and headphones/speakers if sound is included. It is important to check that all necessary files are transferred so that the products work as seen by the candidates.

Assessment

- Standards
 - always use the OCR assessment evidence grid for assessment purposes, paying attention to every detail of the grading descriptors and not awarding levels without clear evidence.
 - pay particular attention to the quality of candidate response when assessing work, ensuring any qualitative criteria are met before awarding a level.

- Evidence
 - evidence can be in various formats, according to centre preference. However, it is important to ensure that the format used does not prevent the verification of any criteria. If colour printing is not available then printed portfolios can be easily supplemented by electronic files, allowing more detail of the product to be seen.
 - consider how evidence, most particularly electronic evidence, can be referenced in a way that enables a visiting moderator to locate it directly and easily.
 - some annotation of evidence, to clarify what it is showing, is to be encouraged
 - where electronic evidence is presented, centres need to have strategies in place to ensure technical problems do not prevent moderation taking place, perhaps by taking a full backup of at least the requested sample to a removable storage device so that it can still be accessed even if a system failure occurs.

Advice and guidance:

- refer to the 'Common Issues' documents, written to clarify issues with the most commonly used units. These can be downloaded from the OCR website.
- join and use the OCR e-community, where questions can be asked and ideas and resources shared.
- where evidence for specific techniques/skills is required, ensure that there is clear guidance for the moderator to indicate where each can be found.
- be vigilant in the assessment of any work involving research, notably Unit 8, parts of AO2 in Unit 1 and part of AO5 in Unit 5, to ensure candidates do not include any material that is simply copied from web pages, unless these are clearly acknowledged quotations added to their own comments for illustrative purposes only. Any plagiarised content, no matter how small, must be removed from candidate portfolios, as if any is found by an external moderator the unit might have to be withdrawn for reassessment by the centre.
- ensure candidates clearly understand the concepts of target audience and purpose. An audience of 'everyone' is not sufficient to be credited.
- ensure all design work is completed and assessed before candidates move on to create products for assessment. This allows the centre to ensure that any Design assessment criteria are fully met, as well as enabling teachers to check that candidates' plans are appropriate for their ability and the time available, allowing them to access all the remaining assessment criteria. External moderation cannot be expected to confirm centre grades if credit is awarded for retrospective 'planning'.
- ensure candidates understand the difference between simply providing a commentary on what has been done during the unit and an evaluation of what has been done, also the difference between an evaluation of a product and of the candidate's own strengths and weaknesses.
- take care that any writing frames used offer candidates the opportunity to write in depth where necessary and that they do not either over-direct candidates or encourage them to simply create lists of ideas.
- check any electronic evidence provided for moderation, to ensure it is complete and that no functionality is lost if it is transferred from student work areas. Where MS PowerPoint products need to be moved, the 'package for CD' option is recommended.

REVISED SPECIFICATION FOR FIRST TEACHING FROM SEPTEMBER 2010

NOTE: The following applies only to the OCR Nationals in ICT (Level 2) specifications. There are no changes to the Level 1 or Level 3 specifications.

Summary of changes to the Level 2 specification

- The specification
 - the unit titles remain the same. The units have been revised to make the content more accurate and explicit.
 - the revised units are available on the OCR website, with any changes highlighted in yellow.
 - where units have changed, a ‘changes made’ document is also available on the website. This identifies why the changes have been made.
 - an updated Centre Handbook is available on the OCR website.
- Awarding rules
 - in order to maintain parity with ICT GCSEs and the school achievement and attainment table points ratings into the future, the number of units required for each of the qualifications has been revised.
 - the guided learning hours have been revised: Group A and B (previously 60 glh) units are now 40 glh and Group C (previously 30 glh) units are now 20 glh. The total number of glh for the First Award is now 100, and the total number of glh for the First Certificate is now 280.
 - candidates will need to achieve an additional Group B unit for the First Award; an additional Group B and a Group C unit for the Award; two Group B units plus a Group C unit for the First Certificate; and an additional three Group B units for the Certificate.
- Availability and administration
 - entries for the revised qualifications have been available from 1 August 2010.
 - the revised qualifications have new scheme codes, including top up entry codes.
 - the last date to make entries for the original qualifications was 31 July 2010. No further entries can now be made.
 - centres with entries for the original qualifications may make top up/moving down entries for the original qualifications until the final awarding deadline of 31 July 2012.
 - it should be possible to co-teach candidates who are entered for the original and revised versions of the qualifications, as most of the teaching content has not changed.
 - the administration of entries, moderation visits and certification remains unchanged.
 - all centres currently approved for OCR Level 2 Nationals in ICT will automatically be approved for the revised OCR Level 2 Nationals in ICT.

INSET opportunities

- a range of courses are available to support teachers with the changes in the specification. The ‘Get Started’ course is free of charge for this year and there are a number of unit-specific ‘Get Ahead’ courses available. For details see the OCR website.