



Improving Productivity Using IT Level 2

Guidance for Centres

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1. Introduction

This document has been produced to provide an overall guide for the Improving Productivity Using IT unit at level 2. This unit has been taken from the revised national occupational standards (NOS) for IT Users as defined by e-skills UK. This unit will form a major part of BCS' enhanced IT User offering for September 2009 which will incorporate ECDL v5.0.

2. Overview of the Unit

The summary of this unit as defined within the e-skills UK NOS is as follows:

Improving Productivity Using IT

This is the ability to plan, evaluate and improve procedures involving the use of IT tools and systems in order to improve the productivity and efficiency of work activities.

Level 2 Summary

An intermediate user can plan and review their use of predefined or commonly used IT tools for work activities that are at times non-routine or unfamiliar. As a result of reviewing their work, they will be able to devise solutions in the use of IT tools in order to improve work productivity. Any aspect that is unfamiliar will require support and advice from other people.

A work activity will typically be 'non-routine or unfamiliar' because:

- the task or context is likely to require some preparation, clarification or research (to separate the components and to identify what factors need to be considered, for example, time available, audience needs, accessibility of source, types of content, message and meaning) before an approach can be planned; and*
- the techniques required will involve a number of steps and at times be non-routine or unfamiliar.*

A full breakdown of the content of this unit is included within this document.

3. Assessment Approach

The nature of this unit and the assessment methodology as defined by e-skills UK means that the undertaking of this unit is different in its approach to a standard ECDL test. The unit is focussed on learners being able to use IT productively and therefore a less prescriptive approach is required. The required assessment approach as defined in the ITQ assessment strategy published by e-skills UK reads:

In order to reflect the standards of competence expected by employers, assessment of the mandatory unit (Improving Productivity using IT) within Certificates and Diplomas must demonstrate that candidates can apply their relevant skills and knowledge to develop a specified outcome, product or solution. The candidate must independently determine, select and apply the necessary IT tools and techniques to achieve their goal.

The assessment design must cover the following aspects:

- *Objectives for using IT – understanding the context in which IT is to be used or the conditions that may affect the way IT is to be used; understanding what outcome needs to be developed, and the expectations and requirements that the outcome must meet;*
- *Application of IT skills and knowledge – understanding what is involved in a piece of work and the best way to get it done;*
- *Evaluation of the use of IT – being able to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the use of IT, including identifying improvements to inform future work.*

The key to the assessment of this unit is therefore learners making choices about applications and tools independently. BCS will be providing a set of scenarios based on common software applications that centres will use for the assessment of this unit. Within this scenario the learner will be expected to display the necessary skills to evidence the NOS requirements. For each scenario the outcome has been specified but the application or tools they should use to produce it have not. This must be retained as the ethos of the assessment of this unit.

There are also a number of knowledge items to be covered within this unit. The approach for these will be multiple choice questioning. For assessment purposes this unit will therefore be broken down into two sections; Knowledge and Performance.

Learners will be required to pass both sections of the assessment in order to achieve this unit. Both sections must be completed during the same assessment session. Therefore learners who may have passed the knowledge section in a previously taken assessment but failed the unit overall will not be able to use this towards a future attempt. Both components must therefore be successfully completed within the same assessment session in order to successfully achieve the unit. The duration of the assessment for this unit is 1 hour.

4. Number of Streams/Scenarios

The Improving Productivity Using IT unit is a standalone unit and therefore cannot presume which of the IT User units a learner may have taken previously. Assignments/scenarios have therefore been created for each of the following common software applications:

- Word Processing
- Spreadsheets
- Presentations

Whilst a specific application should not be prescribed for the learner an output using one of these key applications will be the expected outcome. For example, a scenario may require the learner to produce a newsletter. The expected outcome would be some form of word processed document. Likewise, for a scenario that requires a learner to appropriately format a set of accounts some form of spreadsheet would be the expected outcome.

There will be scenarios for each of the above applications in order to support the assessment of this unit. Centre personnel are expected to select an assignment subject (word processing, spreadsheets or presentations) for a learner to take. The learner will then be presented with one of two scenarios specific to that subject. The learner should not be informed of which application their scenario will cover as choosing the appropriate application to use is part of the assessment criteria.

Eventually it is possible that a greater number of scenarios will be required to cover a broader range of software applications. BCS will review this over time, particularly where there is an identified client need.

The scenarios for this unit require prior knowledge and skills for using common software applications. Because of this it is recommended that this unit is assessed towards the end of a programme of study. This will give learners the opportunity to have gained the necessary knowledge and skills required for this unit.

5. Unit Content - Knowledge Section

The table below highlights the sections of the unit that will be addressed within the knowledge section of the scenario. The table details both the NOS criteria and the examples of content as defined by e-skills UK. BCS has chosen to use these examples of content as the expected assessment outcomes

NOS Ref	NOS Criteria	NOS Example of Content
B1.2	Describe what methods, skills and resources will be required to complete the task successfully	N/A
B1.6	Explain why particular IT systems and software applications were chosen in terms of purpose and outcome	Reasons for choosing IT: Time, convenience, cost; benefits of IT or manual methods of preparing, processing and presenting the same information; own views on convenience and effectiveness at meeting
B1.8	Describe any legal or local guidelines or constraints that may apply to the task or activity	Legal or local guidelines or constraints: May include data protection, copyright, software licensing; organisational house-style or brand guidelines
B2.2	Discuss whether the IT tools selected were appropriate for the task and purpose	IT tools selection: Time taken, convenience, cost, quality, accuracy
B2.3	Analyse strengths and weaknesses of final work	Strengths and weaknesses of final work: Format, layout, accuracy, <i>structure, style, quality</i> , clarity for audience
B2.4	Describe ways to make further improvements to work	Improvements to work: Correct mistakes, avoid affecting other people's work, <i>more efficient and effective ways of doing things</i> , learning new techniques
B3.1	Review the benefits and drawbacks of IT tools and systems used by self and others, in terms of business productivity	N/A
B3.2	Describe ways to improve productivity and efficiency	Ways to improve productivity and efficiency: Save time, save money, streamline work processes, increase output, improve quality of outputs; <i>cost of solution</i>

6. Unit Content - Performance Section

The elements in the table below define those that will be assessed via the performance section of the assessment. The table details both the NOS criteria and the examples of content as defined by e-skills UK. BCS has chosen to use these examples of content as the expected assessment outcomes.

NOS Ref	NOS Criteria	NOS Example of Content
B1.1	Describe the purpose for using IT	Purposes for using IT: Who and what the information is for, when it must be finished, what information needs to be included, where it will be used (on screen, sent to others, printed)
B1.3	Plan how to carry out tasks using IT to achieve the required purpose and outcome	Plan task: What information sources are needed, how they will be found and evaluated, what application software will be used, what skills and resources are needed to complete the task successfully, requirements for content, structure and layout, <i>priorities</i>
B1.4	Describe any factors that may affect the task	Factors that may affect the task: Access to information, steps that need to be taken in advance, availability of time, budget and resources; audience need
B1.5	Select IT systems and software applications as appropriate to purpose	N/A
B1.7	Use IT systems and software to complete planned tasks and produce effective outcomes	N/A
B2.1	Review ongoing use of IT tools and techniques and change the approach as needed	Review use of IT tools: Gather information to help make judgements, analyse information about whether the IT tools and techniques are appropriate to the task and intended outcome
B2.5	Review outcomes in terms of match to requirements and fitness for purpose	Review outcomes: Evaluate the quality of the information used, produce drafts, review against initial plans, check with intended audience, effect of own mistakes on others
B3.3	Develop solutions to improve own productivity in using IT	Develop solutions: Set up short cuts, customise interface, record macros
B3.4	Test solutions to ensure that they work as intended	N/A

7. Assessment - General

It is recommended the manual scenarios are ‘worked through’ by markers/invigilators before assessments are scheduled to ensure the equipment and software are suitable and to ensure they are familiar with the scenario content prior to marking/internally verifying

Each scenario will be presented via a question paper that will contain both the knowledge and performance sections of the assessment. Centre personnel must ensure that Learners have access to the complete question paper and all the required work files (either on a removable storage device or a secure network area, not the Learners normal network user area). Removable storage devices must be labelled with the Learners name and Registration Number

The overall duration for the assessment is one hour. Learners will be required to answer 12 multiple choice questions and perform a number of practical tasks in that time. BCS recommends that learners allow 15 minutes for the multiple choice element and the remaining 45 minutes for the practical tasks. This is merely a guide and learners should not be penalised for taking more time on one aspect and less time on the other. It is the 1 hour total duration that is the important factor.

Learners should be assessed for this unit under examination conditions in accordance with the requirements for other BCS Qualifications, for example:

- Assessment can only take place within an environment that meets the standard requirements
- Invigilator registered with BCS must be present throughout
- Assessment sessions must be fully monitored to ensure it is performed in the required manner
- At the start of each assessment Learners must be made aware of the assessment regulations
- No part of the assessment materials are taken from an assessment room by a Learner. Learners must hand all materials to the Invigilator before leaving the room
- All completed assessment files must be collated and provided for marking, internal verification and centralised recording
- If a Learner has failed an assessment make sure that the re-sit is scheduled for another appropriate day and ensure a different assessment stream is allocated
- Store all assessment papers securely for marking and remove files from PCs where necessary. BCS recommend that all files are write-protected
- The Learner assessment data files must be retained and will be required for the annual audit of the Approved Centre

For full details on BCS' requirements regarding assessment conditions please refer to the latest version of the Centre Operations Manual.

Learners are required to achieve at least 75% of the knowledge section in order to pass this assessment. In addition to this, learners are also required to achieve at least 75% of the tasks within the performance section.

8. Assessment - Manual Test Version

For the knowledge section learners will be provided with an answer file to record their answers for the multiple choice questions. Learners will be required to save this file using the conventions stipulated within the scenario question paper.

For the performance section learners will be provided with a number of source/work files. These will be the files that the learner will need to use to address the tasks defined in the scenario question paper. In most cases learners will be asked to manipulate these files, extract information from them or incorporate them into other documents. Learners will be required to save the relevant files using the conventions stipulated within the scenario question paper.

9. Marking - Manual Test Version

Centre personnel will be expected to mark the outputs from the learner for the manual test versions. This will include both the knowledge and performance sections. BCS will provide full marking guides for each scenario assessment.

Marking/internal verification must be undertaken by markers registered with BCS.

A marking guide must be fully completed for all assessments marked and internally verified.

Centres will be required to retain full records of all manual test outputs and marking guides in line with the requirements for the manual tests for ECDL.

- All manually marked assessments will be subject to internal verification within centres in line with the requirements stipulated for ECDL manual

tests for example, 2nd marking must cover 10% of all assessments across the range of Approved Centre representatives regardless of location or units. IV's must randomly select the 10% sampling, which must also include:

- All cases of borderline achievement (+/- 1 of the pass mark).
- All papers from new assessment Markers until their standard is consistent.

For full details on BCS' requirements regarding marking and internal verification please refer to the latest version of the Centre Operations Manual.

All manually marked assessments must be retained and are subject to sampling by a BCS External Verifier as part of a centre's audit/external verification visit.

For full details on BCS' requirements for retention of work, audit and external verification please refer to the latest version of the Centre Operations Manual.