

Chief Examiner Report

**T Level Technical Qualification
in Digital Business Services
QN: 603/6902/4**

**Summer 2025 – Core Paper A and
Core Paper B**

Introduction

Summer 2025 – Core Paper A and Core Paper B

Assessment dates: Core Paper A 10 June 2025
Core Paper B 17 June 2025

Paper numbers: P002627 (paper-based), P002628 (onscreen), P002629 (paper-based) and P002630 (onscreen)

This report contains information in relation to the externally assessed component provided by the chief examiner, with an emphasis on the standard of student work within this assessment.

The report is written for providers, with the aim of highlighting how students have performed generally, as well as any areas where further development or guidance may be required to support preparation for future opportunities.

Key points:

- grade boundaries
- standard of student work
- evidence creation
- responses to the external assessment tasks
- administering the external assessment

It is important to note that students should not sit this external assessment until they have received the relevant teaching of the qualification in relation to this component.

Grade boundaries

Grade boundaries for the series are:

	Overall	Notional boundaries	
		Paper A	Paper B
Max	212	106	106
A*	167	83	83
A	147	74	73
B	127	64	63
C	107	54	53
D	88	44	43
E	69	35	34

Grade boundaries are the lowest mark with which a grade is achieved.

Students receive a grade for the core exam component as a whole, and although there are no official grades for the individual assessments in the core exam, it can be useful for students and teachers to see how the core exam grade was achieved. The grade

boundaries given for each assessment are known as 'notional grade boundaries', as they are for illustrative purposes only. For further information on

For further detail on how raw marks are converted to uniform mark scale (UMS), and the aggregation of the core component, please refer to the Qualification Specification.

Administering the external assessment

The external assessment is invigilated and must be conducted in line with our [Regulations for the Conduct of External Assessment](#) document. Students may require additional pre-release material to complete the tasks. These must be provided to students in line with our regulations.

Students must be given the resources to carry out the tasks and these are highlighted within the [Qualification Specific Instructions for Delivery](#) (QSID) document.

Standard of student work

This series saw an increase in both the number of students entered for this assessment, and in the quality of the responses to items on these papers. In comparison to the previous series, more students were able to pass this assessment.

Most students attempted every question on both papers, although a small minority did leave some questions blank. Answers to longer questions tended to be better than in previous series.

Failure to accurately use contextual data, as well as a lack in demonstrating higher order skills, such as evaluation and analysis, resulted in some students underperforming.

Providers should continue to ensure that students are given an opportunity to cover all of the relevant specification content and opportunities should be given to practice using unseen data as the basis of responses to questions.

In general, the lack of application was a significant barrier to attainment. Candidates often failed to go beyond generic descriptions of theory and made little, or no use of the contextual data provided. Answers were often superficial and lacked depth; while learners could demonstrate an ability to recall technical terms, only few could demonstrate an understanding of these terms. The more technical topics tended to be more challenging, and evaluation was often limited to stating that something was good because it was easy or cheap. Evaluation requires reasoned judgements, not simplistic assertions.

Responses to the external assessment tasks

Core Paper A

Most students seemed to find this paper easier than Core Paper B, with most achieving higher marks. However, content areas, such as project management continue to prove more challenging.

Students tended to find sections A and B easier, with most able to achieve some marks on most questions. Section C continues to remain more challenging for most students.

Section A: business context and culture

Question 1 proved to be more challenging for students; many students provided answers relating only to the customer-facing impacts of digitalisation, such as the dehumanisation of service, rather than the impacts of digital technology on company culture.

Question 2 proved relatively accessible for most candidates, with answers, such as fines and reputational damage proving popular.

Question 3 was relatively accessible for candidates with many able to state an impact of unsafe use of digital technology for part a, and a mitigation technique for part b. However, it proved more challenging for students to be able to explain how to use mitigation techniques.

Question 4 was generally well answered with most candidates able to name environmental factors for Part a, but relatively few understood how technology could impact the success of a new virtual reality (VR) service, with most giving more general answers about different types of information and communications technology (ICT) equipment.

Question 5 required students to name risks of technical change management, but most students seemed unable to do this. Part b related to the implementation of change, but most candidates seemed to lack an understanding of how change could be implemented.

Question 6 required students to explain how the use of technology described in the stimulus might impact privacy. While most noted that photos of lanyards may result in personal details being shared, few were able to adequately explain this issue.

Question 7 required candidates to explain environmental issues relating to premium keyboard products. While most candidates were able to identify relevant issues, few were able to explain them.

Question 8 related to the ethical issues of a blended learning program. Students were generally able to identify issues but struggled to assess these issues, with most responses being simplistic and descriptive.

Question 9 required an assessment of two different ways that an authorised hacker could help a business secure its IT systems. Most candidates were able to identify ways that an authorised hacker could support the business, but relatively few were able to analyse or evaluate these issues. Most answers tended to be descriptive.

Question 10 required an evaluation of the impact on external stakeholders of the launch of a smart ring. Most answers tended to be descriptive, simply describing impacts on stakeholder groups. Candidates tended to cover a large number of stakeholder's, resulting in a lack of depth in their analysis / evaluation, leading to lower marks.

Section B: digital environments and diversity and inclusion

Question 11 required the identification of one benefit of diversity and inclusion. Most candidates were able to correctly name one benefit.

Question 12 required the naming of a type of hardware in a Local Area Network (LAN). Most students were able to name relevant items, such as a switch. A number of students gave answers, such as cables and hard disk drives.

Question 13 was generally well answered, with most students able to name a mail protocol for Part a, but responses to Part b were generally more mixed with few candidates able to

demonstrate sufficient knowledge of how HTTPS might impact the transmission of data. Answers, such as “it is secure” were common, but were insufficiently detailed to earn a mark – why is it more secure?

Question 14 was generally well answered with most students able to name two protected characteristics of the equality act, although Part b was more challenging, with few candidates able to demonstrate any understanding of why a dataset should be checked for bias.

Question 15 tended to be very challenging for learners with most failing to demonstrate a clear understanding of what a virtual machine is or how it might be used to operate a website.

Question 16 tended to be more challenging, and while many learners were able to name components of a PC, they were unable to earn any marks as they could not explain how these components might be relevant to computer gaming.

Question 17 tended to be relatively challenging with students generally able to identify benefits of different types of networks, such as lower levels of latency, but few were able to develop these responses into a reasoned judgement in order to earn higher marks.

Question 18 related to the benefits of digital inclusion. This proved challenging with many candidates able to name benefits, but few able to assess these benefits.

Question 19 required candidates to evaluate the suitability of cloud computing for a growing online auction business. This question tended to be answered badly, with many responses lacking an understanding of cloud computing beyond the basic idea of storing files online through platforms, such as OneDrive.

Section C: learning and planning

Question 20 required students to name resources needed for project planning. Most candidates were able to accurately name resources, such as staff or money.

Question 21 required students to name factors that might impact validity and reliability of information. Most candidates were able to accurately name two factors.

Question 22 was generally badly answered. Part a required candidates to name the purpose of the project lifecycle. A minority of candidates did accurately give answers, such as providing goals or accountability, but none realised that they needed to give the stages in the model as an answer. Part b required an explanation of methods of quality management that could apply to a business making hot tubs. Inadequately. Few candidates were able to earn marks; a small minority were able to name approaches, such as quality control and quality management, but few were able to demonstrate knowledge of how these methods might apply to the given scenario.

Question 23 required candidates to name a type of extended reality (XR) for part a, which most candidates were able to do. Part b required an explanation of how an emerging technology might be used by a cargo business. While many were able to give a simple description of how a technology might be used, few were able to explain this in detail.

Question 24 required candidates to explain a project planning technique that might be used for launching a new service. While some candidates were able to name a planning technique, few were able to explain this in detail with little or no use made of the stimulus material provided beyond simply copying from it.

Question 25 required candidates to explain two stages of design thinking that might apply to an umbrella manufacturer. This question proved challenging, with many candidates unable to name relevant stages of the model. Those that could name stages of the model were often unable to gain marks as they could not apply the model to the given scenario.

Question 26 required candidates to assess the results of ineffective project planning. While many candidates were able to name consequences, they tended to struggle to apply these issues to the data provided and thus struggled to make reasoned judgements. While many answers tended to focus on first mover advantage, they tended to be simplistic and descriptive, with little evidence of any attempt to weight up evidence.

Question 27 related to the benefits of professional qualifications to a worker. Most candidates were able to at least describe a benefit, such as acquiring skills to become more employable. Few candidates were able to link these benefits to the scenario provided, thus meaning that reasoned judgements were rarely made.

Core Paper B

This paper tends to be more technical and thus proves more challenging for learners. This series was no exception, and candidates found the computer science related topics more challenging.

Answers were often superficial and lacked depth; while learners could demonstrate an ability to recall technical terms, only few could demonstrate an understanding of these terms.

Section A: tools and testing

Question 1 was answered well, with most candidates choosing option b.

Question 2 was generally well answered with many candidates able to name an agile framework.

Question 3 was generally well answered with most candidates able to name a presentation tool for part a, such as digital slides. However, for part b, students struggled to explain how an entertainment venue could use a dashboard to manage bookings.

Question 4 was generally answered well, with many candidates able to state purposes of testing for part a, and explain why testing a user face would be important. However, in general, explanations tended to contain limited detail, and did not go beyond giving a reason for testing the interface

Question 5 proved challenging with few candidates able to demonstrate understanding of what a flow chart might be used for. Most candidates gave simplistic answers, such as “it gives an easy way to share information” or “it is more suitable for non-technical audiences”, neither of which were sufficient enough to gain marks. Candidates should explain why this method would be easier to use or understand or why it is suitable for a specific audience.

Question 6 proved challenging; while many candidates were able to name steps in the root cause analysis process, few were able to explain how this might relate to the development of a mobile application.

Question 7 required an assessment of how collaborative tools might be used to resolve issues for a business operating over multiple time zones. While candidates were generally able to name collaborative tools, they tended to struggle to explain, in context, how these tools might be used.

Question 8 tended to elicit relatively simple, descriptive answers, and while many candidates but able to gain a mark for describing a type of testing, few were able to make a sufficiently detailed assessment of how the testing might help a clothing manufacturer. Use of the stimulus material provided was relatively limited.

Section B: legislation and security

Question 9 required students to name a feature of General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). Too many students gave over simplistic answers, such as “protecting data” without stating how or why the data had to be protected.

Question 10 required students to state the consequences of non-compliance with legislation. Most candidates were able to identify issues, such as fines and reputational damage.

Question 11 required students to name organisations that set standards. Most candidates were able to name organisations, such as the International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO).

Question 12 required students to name two forms of malicious spam. Many responses tended to be accurate, although a significant minority of students gave types of malicious software, such as trojan horses and viruses instead.

Question 13 required students to explain ways that technical threats might damage an e-commerce website. Many candidates were able to name threats, such as ransomware, and some were able to describe the impact, such as encrypting data, but few were able to explain how this might damage the website in any detail.

Question 14 required explanation of how a code of conduct could help a business. While many students were able to give a brief description of a code of conduct, for example that it lays out behavioural expectations, many struggled to link this to the stimulus material provided.

Question 15 required candidates to explain how technical vulnerabilities listed in the stimulus material might affect a financial services company. While many students were able to name the vulnerabilities provided, such as an out-of-date router firmware, few were able to explain how this might impact the IT infrastructure. Many candidates gave general business-related answers, such as poor reputation through disruption to services, therefore gaining no marks.

Question 16 required students to assess the impact of the Freedom of Information Act on a council. While some candidates were able to give generic impacts such as, the risk of fines or legal action, few were able to demonstrate understanding of the requirements placed on public sector organisations by this law.

Question 17 required students to assess risk mitigation controls that a business could use in relation to a printer that accepts USB drives. Students generally struggled to answer this question, naming mitigation techniques that might be appropriate, but not explaining how or why they might be suitable in the context provided.

Question 18 required students to discuss process and protocols relating to internet security for a hotel business. While many responses were able to name security processes and protocols, in some cases describing them, few answers analysed or evaluated these issues in the context provided. Many candidates gave a wide range of answers, sacrificing depth for breadth and thus gaining lower marks.

Section C: data and digital analysis

Question 19 was answered well, with most candidates able to correctly name a decomposition diagram.

Question 20 was answered well with the majority of candidates able to name two sources of external data.

Question 21 was answered inadequately, with most students able to identify two methods of visualising data for Part a. Part b proved more challenging with candidates struggling to explain how training could be provided using XR, although a minority of responses gave a good answer about using authentic environments as the basis for training.

Question 22 was somewhat challenging. Some candidates were able to name processes of computational thinking, but many confused this with the characteristics of an algorithm in Part a. In part b, candidates struggled to demonstrate knowledge of what a flowchart is or how it might be used.

Question 23 proved challenging with candidates tending to give the characteristics of an algorithm rather than the uses of an algorithm for Part a. Part b required candidates to explain how an algorithm could be used to analyse grades. While candidates were able to show some knowledge of how data can be analysed, such as the calculation of averages, few were able to show how an algorithm might be used to do this.

Question 24 required an explanation of how help desk data could be used by the IT support team at a business. Candidates were often able to name purposes, such as the construction of a frequently asked question (FAQ), but few were able to explain how this might be based on the data collected in the scenario.

Question 25 required an explanation of how a clothing manufacturer could use an information system.

Few candidates were able to demonstrate an understanding of what an information system is or how it could be used. Providers should focus on teaching this concept so that students know what it is and how it differs from similar tools, such as databases.

Question 26 required candidates to demonstrate an understanding of how the entity relationship model could be used by a comic retailer. Few students were able to demonstrate any understanding of the entity relationship model. Some answers confused the model with entity relationship diagrams, with common wrong answers relating to the visualisation of data.

Question 27 required students to explain why the iterative and unambiguous nature of an algorithm would be used within an algorithm dealing with college admissions. Candidates tended to define these terms without linking them to the scenario provided and few were able to demonstrate understanding of how these concepts might apply to the scenario provided.

Question 28 required students to assess the resource considerations involved in building a database of artefacts in a museum. Both the context and the content assessed proved challenging, with few candidates able to show any understanding of how a museum might catalogue resources. Few students were able to identify resource requirements involved in building a database.

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