# Chief Examiner Report

**T Level Technical Qualification in Digtial Support Services QN: 603/6901/2**

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

## Introduction

Summer 2025 – core paper A and core paper B

Assessment dates: Core Paper A 11 June 2025
Core Paper B 18 June 2025

Paper numbers: Core Paper A P002701 (paper-based) and P002703 (onscreen)
Core Paper B P002702 (paper-based) and P002704 (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
- responses to the external assessment questions
- administering the external assessment

It is important to note that students should not sit the core examinations until they have received the relevant teaching of the qualification in relation to this component, and that both papers must be taken in any given series that a student sits the core exams.

## Grade boundaries

Raw mark grade boundaries for the series are:

| | Overall | Notional boundaries | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | Paper A | Paper B |
| **Max** | 237 | 106 | 131 |
| **A*** | 202 | 92 | 109 |
| **A** | 177 | 83 | 94 |
| **B** | 152 | 71 | 81 |
| **C** | 128 | 59 | 68 |
| **D** | 104 | 48 | 55 |
| **E** | 80 | 37 | 43 |

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

notional grade boundaries, please see our guide T Levels: Notional boundaries for the core exam assessments (Paper 1 and Paper 2) available on the qualification page on the NCFE website.

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 must be given the resources to complete the assessment, and these are highlighted within the Qualification Specific Instructions for Delivery (QSID) document.

### Standard of student work

In this series, students generally performed well. Overall, students answered most questions across paper A and B. However, there were some instances where sections of questions were not answered by many students, such as in core paper B, Section D.

Students also appeared to struggle with some of the command verbs, for example, describe, state, analyse and so on. It would be helpful for providers to ensure students understand the difference between these verbs.

Students lost marks due to the lack of detail provided in certain questions, relating to the key words identified within the question. Students lost marks due to not providing reasoned judgements and conclusions, as identified within many questions.

There was a range of achievement seen throughout, including some exceptional answers on the 15 mark questions from a small selection of students, although there was a high number of students who did not attempt to answer any of the 15-mark questions at all.

### Responses to the external assessment questions

**Core paper A**

**Section a: business context and culture**

Question 1: this Multiple Choice Question (MCQ) was generally answered correctly by all students.

Question 2: most students were able to identify at least one step organisations may take to manage change implementation, with most achieving the full two marks.

Question 3 (a): it was pleasing to see many students were able to identify one potential impact on society that an increased reliance on digital technology can have.

Question 3 (b): this question often resulted in students achieving one mark for explaining one way the increasing reliance on artificial intelligence (AI) may cause ethical or moral impacts on the company. Some students lost the second mark for not relating their response to the impact on the company. An example of a full-mark response would be, ‘The reliance on AI could have ethical and moral impact as it would result in some artists jobs being replaced by autonomous operation (1). However, AI generated images rely on existing data, which could limit originality and result in edited photos that lack innovation (1)’.

Question 4 (a): there was a mixed response to this question. Students were asked to identify one external economic factor that can influence the success of an app. However, while many responses from the students were external factors, they were not ‘economic factors’, such as inflation or a recession.

Question 4 (b): this question often resulted in one mark for explaining one way implementing multi-factor authentication (MFA) could result in increased engagement and higher subscriptions for the company. Some students lost the second mark for not relating their response to the company. An example of a full-mark response would be, ‘MFA will provide a higher level of account security, so that users know that their data and activities are protected (1). This will ensure that users trust the company and will encourage users old and new to engage more frequently with the social media app (1)’.

Question 5 (a): almost all students were able to identify one internal stakeholder within a company.

Question 5 (b): there was a mixed response to this question. The students were asked to explain one way a competitor might impact LMC Eco Solutions’ plans to expand into international markets, and some students lost the second mark for not relating their response back to the scenario / company. An example of a full-mark response would be, ‘A competitor may impact LMC Eco Solutions’ plans by offering cheaper eco-friendly packaging (1). This could make it harder to attract customers in the international market, especially if price is more important than innovation (1)’.

Question 6: many students successfully explained one way of providing increased value to customers and achieved the full two marks.

Question 7: students were asked to explain two ways a change advisory board (CAB) would help relieve Muhammed’s concern about moving the infrastructure to cloud services. Many students were able to relate their understanding of CAB well but often lost marks for not relating it to the scenario. An example of a full-mark response would be ‘Change advisory board (CAB) members will bring diverse views regarding the change to cloud services as they will be able to identify potential risks, including security vulnerabilities, across all departments (1). The CAB can then propose measures to address these risks, such as backup plans or phased migration of the infrastructure and data (1)’.

Question 8: students generally understood this task well, where they were asked to discuss how Rachel could encourage staff to regulate their use of digital technology. However, because we were asking the students to ‘discuss’, we were looking for more of a developed discussion point from some students. Many students achieved one or two marks for this question but often didn’t achieve the third mark due to not giving a reasoned judgement/conclusion. An example of a full-mark response would be ‘Rachel could organise sessions that raise awareness of excessive use of digital systems at busy times for the college, allowing staff to come together to discuss issues and identify strategies that can be used to help moderate digital usage, for example a rota for staffing (1). Rachel could ensure that policies are in place across the college to help reduce times staff need to be using college systems, such as a policy that allows flexible working hours that allow staff to take longer breaks (1). The impact of these changes could be that staff feel more confident to raise issues when they need to and feel better supported when facing such issues (1)’.

Question 9: students were asked to discuss two roles that codes of conduct will play in supporting the software development company to adhere to ethical principles. Similarly to Q8, they were required to provide a discussion to achieve full marks. However, many students achieved lower marks here for not providing an in-depth discussion. An example of a full-mark response would be ‘The code of conduct should provide clear guidance on how to behave ethically whereas compromising data security to speed up development goes against this (1). By following the code of conduct employees will recognise the importance of protecting user trust and privacy over taking shortcuts (1). This will ensure that the company maintains its reputation for ethical practices, which is vital considering it’s handling health data (1).’

Question 10: this question was a 12-mark question with 3-mark quality of written communication (QWC). In previous years, students have often missed providing clear judgements and evaluative comments when responding to the brief. However, in this series we have seen some high marks awarded. Many students provided a range of knowledge and understanding, and gave a reasoned evaluation.

**Section b: diversity, inclusion and digital environments**

Question 11: this MCQ was generally answered correctly by all students.

Question 12: students were asked to identify two categories of application software used in business. Many students achieved this correctly, but there were many students identifying the name of software, for example, ‘Microsoft Word’, whereas we were looking for categories of application software, such as productivity suites (for example, Video editing).

Question 13 (a): almost all students successfully identified one peripheral used in computer systems. There were a few students that identified internal components instead, which resulted in them losing a mark.

Question 13 (b): students were asked to explain why the central processing unit (CPU) is a critical internal component for gaming system performance. Most students only achieved half marks, because they often only described what a CPU was, rather than why it is a critical component for gaming system performance.

Question 14: students were able to explain one way that having a diverse and inclusive workplace will benefit the company as it expands, and most achieved full marks for this question.

Question 15 (a): almost all students were able to successfully identify two layers of the open systems interconnection (OSI) reference model.

Question 15 (b): some students had good knowledge of DHCP/DNS and were able to explain how they can be used to address the issues that the company is experiencing, whereas some students lacked knowledge in this topic.

Question 16 (a): almost all students were able to successfully identify two effects of digital inclusion on individuals.

Question 16 (b): almost all students were able to successfully explain two ways that attending the course and being gifted the digital devices may improve the digital inclusion for the individuals.

Question 17: students were asked to discuss how inclusive recruitment can address demographic imbalance in the development team. However, because we were asking the students to ‘discuss’, we were looking for more of a developed discussion point from some students, and some students were awarded one or a maximum of two marks out of three for this question. A typical response would be as follows; ‘By hiring individuals from diverse cultural and social backgrounds it will bring different perspectives and experiences to the team providing insights that could enhance the authenticity of their games (1). A more diverse team will help to identify authentic and engaging cultural content which may improve the games reception and commercial success (1). In conclusion, inclusive recruitment is essential for enabling the company to meet the creative demands of global projects and to remain competitive in a diverse marketplace (1)’.

Question 18: students were asked to discuss how virtualisation can resolve each of the issues that the IT manager is concerned about. However, because we were asking the students to ‘discuss’, we were looking for more of a developed discussion point from some students, and some students were awarded one or a maximum of two marks out of three for this question. A typical response we were looking for

would be as follows: ‘Implementing virtualisation would allow for increased scalability as more servers can be added quickly when required without needing physical equipment (1). These resources can be easily powered down when they are not required, leading to better resource utilisation and limiting costs (1). As the company is still rapidly expanding using virtualisation would remove costly upfront purchases of new equipment needed to support the operation while providing the required flexibility to support the growing company (1)’.

Question 19: this question was a 12-mark question with 3-mark QWC. In previous years, students have often missed providing clear judgements and evaluative comments when responding to the brief. However, in this series we have seen some high marks awarded. Many students provided a very good range of knowledge and understanding on cloud computing and evaluated with reasoning. Therefore, we saw some high marks for this question across the board.

**Section c: learning and planning**

Question 20: this MCQ was generally answered incorrectly by most students.

Question 21: many students successfully understood examples of emerging digital technology.

Question 22 (a): most students were able to identify one consequence of ineffective project planning.

Question 22 (b): most students were able to explain one reason why the company should consider people and skills when project planning for mobile apps, with most students achieving full marks for this question.

Question 23 (a): many students were able to successfully identify one source of knowledge that could be used for research.

Question 23 (b): many students were able to explain one factor Emily must consider to ensure reliability and validity when researching for her project and achieved full marks for this question.

Question 24 (a): most students were able to identify two quality management techniques used in project planning.

Question 24 (b): most students successfully explained how each of the issues that emerged during development could have been avoided through effective project planning.

Question 25: students were asked to discuss how each of the following design thinking techniques can be applied to help Marco address the challenges the bakery is facing: identify user needs and conduct qualitative research with users. Students were asked to include reasoned judgements and conclusions. Due to this, students often lost marks, as many students did not provide reasoned judgements or conclusions.

**Core paper B**

**Section a: digital support services pathway**

Question 1: this question was generally answered correctly by all students.

Question 2: students generally answered this question correctly, by stating one purpose of an organisational framework for troubleshooting and problem management.

Question 3 (a): almost all students successfully identified one other route into digital support services, although some students responded with job titles here, which lost them marks.

Question 3 (b): almost all students were able to explain one way that undertaking work-based learning would better prepare George for a career in network engineering.

Question 4 (a): almost all students could identify two job roles within a digital support team. Although some students lost marks for identifying generic roles, such as ‘customer services’, or ‘leader’.

Question 4 (b): most students lost marks for this question, as they did not answer the question correctly. The question asked students to ‘explain how one of these skills will allow the company to provide better support’. This question was referring to these skills mentioned in the brief, prioritisation of tasks and workload and active listening. However, some students responded to question 4 (b) based on their responses they provided in question 4 (a).

Question 5 (a): students were able to identify two reasons why interactions may take place between the digital support services team and other colleagues, with most students achieving full marks.

Question 5 (b): most students were able to explain two ways Jacob’s team can interact with technical and non-technical managers regarding monthly project updates, with many achieving full marks.

Question 6: students demonstrated good knowledge of fault analysis tools and were able to explain two ways that fault analysis tools may be used to identify the network issues mentioned in the question.

Question 7: this was a 3-mark question, and it asked students to assess one way the online store may use the root cause analysis approach of five Whys to resolve the issues. As this is an ‘assess’ question, we were looking for three individual assessment points. However, many students only provided one assessment point and often lost marks. The question asked for reasoned judgements and a conclusion. For example, ‘The online store could use the five Whys root cause analysis approach; this will allow them to understand the underlying cause of the sudden network outage by repeatedly asking "Why?" until the root issue is identified (1). This method is effective as it encourages in-depth discussions among team members, enabling them to pinpoint the potential cause of the outage and develop practical, long-term solutions (1). Therefore, its simplicity makes it particularly useful for quickly determining the reason behind the sudden network outage, as it allows teams to methodically drill down to the Core issue (1)’.

Question 8: this question asked students to assess the importance of the digital support team considering its audience requirements when planning the training sessions. Similar to question 7, this is an ‘assess’ question, hence a complete answer requires three assessment points. Many students lost marks in this question due to not providing a conclusion.
For example, ‘It will be very important that the team considers audience requirements as it is clear that all the features provided by the collaborative software won’t be required by all employees (1). Senior management that will only use video conferencing may also only need basic information on how to use shared workspaces or messaging, whereas departments like the Marketing team may need more in-depth training on all the different tools to make their work more efficient (1). If the support team provides the same training to each department this will mean that employees may not get the information they need or they may get too much information, which may deter them from using the software (1)’.

**Section b: tools and testing**

Question 9: many students were able to state one primary purpose of marketing analytics tools.

Question 10: many students were able to identify one reason for using Gantt charts in project management

Question 11 (a): most students were able to identify one other purpose of testing when performing a software upgrade. However, students lost marks when they provided other examples of testing types rather than responding to the question.

Question 11 (b): many students achieved one out of the two marks for this question where they were asked to explain why usability testing is important for the airline as part of its software upgrade process. Students lost marks by not relating their answer to the brief. Many students responded by explaining why usability is important but failed to clarify why it is important for the airline as part of its software upgrade process.

Question 12 (a): many students were able to identify two digital components that may require testing.

Question 12 (b): many students achieved two marks here for describing how known-environment testing may be used for this programme. Where students lost the second mark, is for not explaining how it could be used for this programme. For example, ‘It could use known environments testing to validate the discount calculator’s performance and behaviour under the controlled conditions they have identified (1). This would help to ensure that the calculator applies the correct discount before it is used in real-world situations (1)’.

Question 13: for this question, students were asked to explain how the management team can do the following: implement, monitor and sustain the change. Most students achieved half marks here, due to not relating their response back to the scenario. For example, ‘As the solar farm have used root cause analysis to identify the problem causing the safety issue, they need to now set up an action plan for the safety training for its operators (1). This will help them to implement the change as someone will be assigned responsibility to source and implement the training within a set timescale (1)’.

Question 14: students were asked to discuss how using financial analytics tools may help the company to make informed investment decisions. This was a three-mark question and as this is a 'discuss' question, we were looking for three individual discussion points. However, many students only provided one point and often lost marks. For a discussion question, students need to provide a conclusion at the end of their discussion. For example, ‘The use of financial analytics tools by the investment firm will enable it to assess the historical performance of investments (1). If this historical data was not available, the firm would not be able to evaluate past price movements and trends and predict future performance (1). Therefore, having valuable insights from the use of financial analytics tools will help the firm make informed financial decisions for its clients (1)’.

Question 15: students were asked to discuss the most appropriate project management methodology that could be used by the team to plan the outdoor festival. It was a four-mark question, so we were looking for four points from the students. Some students achieved high marks for this question, and in contrast others achieved lower marks. The difference was due to how well the students provided evaluative conclusions and related their response back to the scenario.

**Section C: security and legislation**

Question 16: almost all students could state one type of confidential information held by the human resources department. Although for those students that did not achieve this one mark, this was due to providing a generic response, such as ‘employee details’.

Question 17: almost all students could state two reasons why it is important for businesses to keep up to date with UK and international legislation and regulations, with most achieving full marks.

Question 18 (a): students were asked to state one potential vulnerability of software no longer being supported by a supplier. It was pleasing to see most students achieved full marks here.
Question 18 (b): many students were able to explain one potential impact to the regional government department by the legacy software no longer being supported by its supplier. However, some students lost marks due to failing to link their response to the government department / scenario.

Question 19 (a): almost all students were able to state two legislation or regulation requirements that are applied across digital sectors, achieving the full two marks.

Question 19 (b): almost all students were able to explain how two features of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 can ensure a safe and secure working environment for the company's remote team, and achieved full marks.

Question 20: students were able to explain two ways that cross-site scripting (XSS) may be used by the malicious hacker, and often many students achieved high marks for this question.

Question 21: students were asked to discuss the role that the British Computer Society (BCS) code of conduct will play in resolving the compliance issue. This was a 'discuss' question, worth three marks, therefore we were looking for two individual discussion points and a conclusion for the third mark. However, many students only provided one point and often lost marks. For a discussion question, students need to provide a conclusion at the end of their discussion. Most students achieved one or two marks for this question, rather than the full marks.

Question 22: students were asked to discuss the potential consequences of this breach in terms of confidentiality, integrity and availability. This was a 'discuss' question, worth three marks, therefore we were looking for two individual discussion points and a conclusion for the third mark. However, many students only provided one point and often lost marks. For a discussion question, students need to provide a conclusion at the end of their discussion. Most students achieved one or two marks for this question, rather than the full marks.

Question 23: students were asked to discuss why it is important for the air museum to configure firewall inbound and outbound rules. To gain full marks, students needed to provide three discussion points.

Question 24: this question was a 12-mark question with 3-mark QWC. In previous years, students have often missed providing clear judgements and evaluative comments when responding to the brief. However, in this series, we have seen some high marks awarded. Many students provided a range of knowledge and understanding on ransomware attacks and evaluated with reasoning.

**Section D: data and digital analysis**

Question 25: many students achieved the one available mark for this question and were able to identify one common data type used in an input box.

Question 26: students were asked to identify two types of user access controls used in data access management. There was a mix of responses here. While some students achieved full marks for this, other students did not have sufficient knowledge on user access controls, so provided incorrect responses.

Question 27 (a): students were asked to state two other key characteristics of an algorithm. However, most students did not have the sufficient knowledge on characteristics of algorithms to respond to this question correctly.

Question 27 (b): students were asked to explain one way the use of decomposition would help the engineers to design the algorithm. Most students achieved one mark here, due to not relating their response back to the scenario. For example, 'Decomposition will help the engineers to understand what the traffic problems are in the city and where / when they occur (1). By breaking down this complex problem into smaller, more manageable chunks it will allow them to address each part individually, such as real-time traffic updates or GPS integration (1)'.

Question 28: most students did not achieve any marks for this question due to not being able to correctly identify two applications of algorithms for digital analysis, such as automating calculations to improve efficiency of a process.

Question 29: students generally understood this task well and were able to explain two benefits of using a flowchart to show employees how the new IT helpdesk would work.

Question 30 (a): most students did not achieve any marks for this question, due to lack of understanding when identifying two data formats that could be used by data analysts. We had responses from students referring to data types, such as Boolean / text / integer, whereas the question asks for data formats as identified in the specifications (file-based structure / directory-based structure / relational database)

Question 31: students were asked to explain how the basketball coach could use the sources of data they collect about the team to improve performance. Most students achieved full marks for this question. Those that did not achieve full marks, did not explain their response. For example, ‘The basketball coach could use internal employee (players’) data, such as player statistics, performance and feedback, to support the team’s improvement strategy (1). With this data and insight, the coach could make informed decisions about training plans, which will help to develop player skills or devise game tactics (1)’.

Question 32: students were asked to evaluate the most effective way algorithms can be used as part of threat analysis processes. Most students achieved one mark for this question due to not providing evaluative comments. For example, ‘The most effective way algorithms can be used is through an automated response that will trigger actions automatically when a threat is detected (1). However, the algorithms may misinterpret the context, which could result in a poor overall experience (1). Therefore, this automation will allow the cyber security teams to focus their efforts on analysing and quickly responding to critical threats, although these could be false alarms (1)’.

Question 33: students were asked to assess the use of a relational database system to support the company's waste management processes. Students often achieved one mark, due to a lack of assessment points. Many students provided brief responses.

Question 34: students were asked to discuss the implication of using Structured English to design the algorithm for managing the school’s donation wish list. Most students achieved one or two marks due to limited discussion points.

Question 35: this question was a 12-mark question with 3-mark QWC. In this series, we have seen some high marks awarded for this question. Many students provided a range of knowledge and understanding on using an information system to ensure data accuracy and user privacy, evaluating their responses with reasoning.

## Document information



The T Level Technical Qualification is a qualification approved and managed by the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education.

NCFE is authorised by the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education to develop and deliver this Technical Qualification.