



HM Government

T-LEVELS

Chief Examiner Report

**T Level Technical Qualification in
Digital Business Services (603/6902/4)**

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

Introduction

Autumn 2025 – Core Paper A and Core Paper B

Assessment dates: Core Paper A 02 December 2025
Core Paper B 09 December 2025

Paper numbers: Core Paper A P003012 (paper-based) and P003013 (onscreen)
Core Paper B P003014 (paper-based) and P003015 (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 examinations.

Grade boundaries

Raw mark 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 tutors 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

This was a resit series, which only saw a small number of entries. In general, students tended to do slightly better than in previous series, reflecting their having already sat the exam in the summer. A slightly wider range of grades was achieved, on both Core A and Core B. In general, students tended to do well on items related to general business theory and basic ICT content. More technical content, such as project management or the design of algorithms, tended to prove more challenging. Students tended to struggle with exam technique, and many lost marks because they did not fully recognise the demands of all of the questions, particularly those requiring analysis and evaluation. For future series, centres should focus on ensuring that students are familiar with all of the unit content and that they are able to analyse and evaluate their arguments using relevant theory.

Responses to the external assessment questions

Core Paper A

Section A: business context and culture

Question 1: students generally performed well, with most able to demonstrate knowledge of at least one measurable value of digital services.

Question 2: this question generally proved challenging, with many students giving consequences of reliance on digital technology in general, without relating them to digital culture.

Question 3: students generally found this question challenging and struggled to demonstrate knowledge of technical change management (part a). Rollback planning also proved a challenging topic, with students struggling to demonstrate knowledge of the concept (part b).

Question 4: this question proved challenging, with few students able to demonstrate knowledge of types of codes of conduct (part a) or why a business would use these (part b).

Question 5: many students found this question relatively accessible and were able to give a developed answer related to the implementation of mitigation measures to improve the safe use of digital technology.

Question 6: this question generally proved accessible to most students, with many able to show some knowledge of how customers and suppliers might be affected by the introduction of a new device aimed at the extreme sports market. However, analysis and evaluation of the arguments made tended to be relatively superficial, failing to fully explore the implications of the points given.

Question 7: this question proved very challenging to students, with few able to demonstrate knowledge of the ethical and moral impact of running a streaming service. Many students misread the case study and assumed that offering streams of performances would be unethical in and of itself.

Question 8: this question tended to be accessible, with most students able to demonstrate some knowledge of unauthorised hacking. Analysis and evaluation tended to be relatively simplistic, with few students able to assess the implications of those they identified.

Question 9: many students struggled to gain analysis and application marks because their answers were unbalanced, focussing purely on positives; they often copied data from the question stem without analysing it, and they did not support the judgements they made effectively.

Section B: diversity and inclusion, and digital environments

Question 10: this question generally proved accessible, with most students able to name an element of the TCP / IP model.

Question 11: this question generally proved relatively accessible, with most students able to identify option A as a digital inclusion principle. A notable minority of students tended to give D as a wrong answer, reflecting a common tendency to conflate digital inclusion with inclusion more generally.

Question 12: this question yielded a mix of correct answers and simple misconceptions. Many students failed to recognise that a peripheral is an external device, instead giving internal computer components, such as CPUs and RAM, as their answers (part a). Few students were able to demonstrate a knowledge of SSDs, with many giving oversimplistic answers, such as 'It has large storage.' It proved challenging for students to link characteristics of an SSD with the context of a 3D game (part b).

Question 13: on the whole this question proved challenging. As with question 11, many students confused digital inclusion with inclusion more generally.

Question 14: this question generally proved accessible, albeit it needed to elicit simplistic answers in relation to having a diverse and inclusive workforce. Beyond generic points, such as having a greater range of ideas for products, students struggled to analyse these points or to apply them to the context of the question.

Question 15: this question proved challenging, with many students struggling to demonstrate understanding of the concept of productivity software. Many responses suggested that this software would be used to monitor staff activities, suggesting that students had confused it with 'bossware'.

Question 16: this question proved somewhat accessible but tended to elicit relatively simplistic answers regarding demographic imbalance. Students tended to repeat elements of the question stem without making any analytical comments, thus failing to gain any marks.

Question 17: many students found this question challenging and were often unable to differentiate between public and private clouds.

Question 18: students generally performed well and were often able to demonstrate some knowledge of aspects of a resilient digital environment, albeit with few able to analyse the implications of this in depth. Some students did not relate the resilient digital environment back to the gaming company scenario.

Section C: learning and planning

Question 19: most students were able to name two technologies with innovative applications.

Question 20: few students were able to demonstrate any knowledge of quality management in the context of project planning.

Question 21: this question proved relatively accessible, with many students able to name stages in the design thinking process (part a). Only a few students were able to demonstrate knowledge of Kolb's learning cycle, although some did gain a mark for making generic comments about reflective learning.

Question 22: most students were able to name a project planning technique, although some confused project planning with project management (part a). Only a few students were able to demonstrate any knowledge of how the PERT model would help the solar company to plan their project (part b).

Question 23: this question tended to elicit relatively simplistic answers, with students making comments about the project running over budget or the ride opening late, based on information in the question stem. Few students were able to analyse the business consequences of this.

Question 24: this question proved moderately accessible, with many students able to identify benefits of CPD, such as higher salaries, but few were able to link this to the scenario provided.

Question 25: few students were able to demonstrate knowledge of the concepts of validity and reliability. Some students seemed to believe that the concepts are interchangeable.

Question 26: few students were able to demonstrate any knowledge of budgets beyond a basic notion that it might involve money and that it might be bad not to stick to it. Answers tended to be too superficial to deserve higher marks.

Core Paper B

Section A: tools and testing

Question 1: most students were able to name a communication tool.

Question 2: many students were able to name a testable digital component.

Question 3: few students were able to name an evaluation tool, instead naming things like surveys (part a). Some students were able to give a simple description of how marketing analytics might allow a business to expand its customer base (part b).

Question 4: most students were able to name at least one stage in the root cause analysis process (part a), but many students struggled to explain how the process would solve the issues experienced by the ticket website (part b).

Question 5: this question proved relatively accessible, with many students able to give a simplistic answer, such as 'It makes the data easier to understand for a non-specialist audience', but few could explain the merits of an infographic in greater detail.

Question 6: most students were able to demonstrate some knowledge of either concept or stress testing, but few were able to develop those points in greater detail in the context of a company selling snack dispensers for pets.

Question 7: students generally struggled to demonstrate knowledge of collaborative tools and technologies. Many could give simple answers based on users being able to edit documents at the same time, but few were able to set this in the context of a group of students working on a project together.

Question 8: most students were able to demonstrate a simple understanding of usability testing in general but tended to struggle to analyse this in the context of a business selling pay-as-you-go usage of e-scooters.

Section B: legislation and security

Question 9: most students were able to name relevant risk mitigation controls.

Question 10: students generally struggled to name features of GDPR (part a), but they were often able to give a simple explanation of how the museum could adhere to the legislation, for example, by only holding data for a specific purpose.

Question 11: most students were able to name at least one form of commercially sensitive information (part a) and were able to show relevant consequences of not maintaining confidentiality, integrity and availability in relation to company data (part b).

Question 12: students generally were not able to demonstrate any knowledge of professional codes of conduct (part a) or how ISO certification would benefit the printing business (part b).

Question 13: students were generally able to show some limited knowledge of risk management, with answers tending to be simplistic and superficial without any link to the context of a company upgrading an online booking system.

Question 14: most students were able to show a basic understanding of the consequences of failing to adhere to legislation, such as prosecution, but tended to struggle to analyse the implication of this.

Question 15: this question tended to elicit relatively simplistic answers. Students generally lacked understanding of the technical aspects of VPNs / SSL / TLS, with most answers focussing on the use of data encryption. Students generally struggled to relate their limited knowledge to the context provided.

Question 16: students tended to show a relatively superficial understanding of technical threats and, to a lesser extent, non-technical threats. Overall, answers had weak links to the context provided and tended to come to simplistic conclusions.

Section C: digital analysis and data

Question 17: students generally struggled to demonstrate an understanding of the functions of information systems, with most answers relating more generally to computer systems.

Question 18: students were generally able to define the term 'algorithm' (part a) but tended to struggle to demonstrate knowledge of the concept of machine learning (part b). Students generally repeated information from the question stem without adding any meaningful explanation.

Question 19: students tended to struggle to name (part a) or explain (part b) different forms of access control. Answers tended to be simplistic, relating to tutors being able to access student work, without significant further explanation.

Question 20: students generally were unable to demonstrate knowledge of suitable tools for problem solving and algorithm designs, often naming applications such as Excel instead (part a). Knowledge of abstraction was also more limited, with few students able to indicate that this might relate to the removal of extraneous data (part b).

1 Question 21: most students were able to name at least one characteristic of an algorithm (part a), with
2 some able to explain how an algorithm might be used to choose between a drone or a robot when
3 delivering goods (part b).

4
5 Question 22: students were generally able to explain how different data types might be used within a
6 booking system in simple terms, but few were able to explain these issues in greater depth.

7
8 Question 23: students generally struggled to assess how pattern recognition could help with the testing
9 of games. They tended to give simplistic answers relating to the finding of solutions to games.

10
11 Question 24: students mostly answered this question relatively well, with answers tending to relate to
12 basic marketing issues, such as identifying target markets. Students struggled to recognise that the
13 question asked about attracting new customers, with answers often examining how more revenue could
14 be earned from existing customers.

15
16 Question 25: students generally found this question challenging, with answers focussing on generic
17 benefits of visualising data with limited links back to the 3D printing business and exhibition. Answers
18 tended to lack balance and generally lacked evaluative depth.
19

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