



HM Government

T-LEVELS

Chief Examiner Report

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

**Autumn 2025 – employer set project
(ESP) Digital Support**

Introduction

Autumn 2025 – employer set project (ESP) Digital Support

Assessment dates: **3 November 2025 to 14 November 2025**

Paper number: P003022

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

Raw mark grade boundaries for the series are:

	Overall
Max	76
A*	67
A	58
B	49
C	41
D	33
E	25

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

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

The standard of work students produced is consistent with previous assessment windows and follows the same pattern regarding task performance. Tasks 1 and 3, which required higher-order skills and the application of knowledge, proved more difficult for students.

Many students demonstrated confidence in their interviews, although they lost marks from adhering too rigidly to their scripts. Higher-achieving students demonstrated the ability to deviate from the planned questions to explore points raised by the IT manager, developing a deeper understanding of the communication platform issues.

Students are improving their approach to writing for both technical and non-technical audiences, with good analytical thinking evidenced. In Task 3, students demonstrated their ability to apply logical problem solving to complex communication challenges, although their justifications were less well written and remain an area for improvement.

English and mathematics skills (AO4) assessment marks continue to improve, with many students gaining three to four marks.

Evidence creation

Most students submitted well-structured evidence in appropriate formats. The interview audio recordings for Task 2 were, in most cases, of good quality with participants' voices easy to hear and understand. Unfortunately, some providers did not account for background noise, making some recordings more difficult to assess. In some instances, other conversations could be heard in the background. It is paramount that providers minimise distractions and refrain from making disparaging remarks to students after the interview concludes.

'In some instances, the microphone was placed very close to the interviewee, making it easy to hear their responses; unfortunately, this affected how easy it was to hear the students' questions.

Some students would have benefitted from more attention to completeness in their documentation. Test plans occasionally lacked structure, whilst project proposals sometimes omitted comprehensive justifications and costings.

There is no need for students to upload their task briefs or Word versions; correctly named PDFs will suffice, and any additional documentation is a waste of time and effort.

Some students are still including hyperlinks in their documents. Due to the scanning process of student evidence, these links become non-functional. Therefore, adding links should be discouraged, even though no penalty is imposed.

Responses to the external assessment tasks

Task 1: troubleshooting document

In Task 1, students are presented with two helpdesk scenarios for Innovate Digital Wave. The first computer has a fault that causes sound failure; otherwise, it is working perfectly. Student performance on this was good, with an average of 60% of the available marks awarded. Most students could apply a standard troubleshooting framework, with 5 Whys? or Fishbone being the most popular. Most students

checked for muted settings, loose hardware or faulty drivers. Unfortunately, the documentation often let the student down, by not having enough detail to be awarded top band.

Task 1: test plan document

The second computer had a CRM access issue. Scores were generally low, with a mean of just 6.16 out of 16, making this the single most difficult task of the project. Most students could list basic tests such as 'ping' or switching browsers, but few produced a detailed plan coherent enough for a colleague to follow. It's a clear indicator of a skills gap: students can list tools, but they find it much harder to design a structured, logical test plan from scratch.

Precision was the missing ingredient in the lower-marked scripts. While the strongest students provided explicit details such as how to flush a DNS cache to establish a clear benchmark for success, others fell behind. We saw too many minimal or irrelevant explanations that didn't really address the specific problem of a web-based system failing while the rest of the network stayed active. This suggests a recurring trend. Students seem much more comfortable jumping into "fixing" a problem in the moment than stepping back to design a formal process to verify that fix through testing.

Looking ahead, providers need to bridge the gap between theory and practice. Root cause analysis shouldn't be taught as a standalone topic; it needs to be inextricably linked to the creation of formal test plans. This task did exactly what it was supposed to do - it highlighted the massive difference between a surface-level fix and the deep technical understanding required for complex support. To boost future results, the focus must shift. Students need more practice using tables to map out tests against expected results. If we can strengthen these documentation skills, we can stop students from losing marks on these high-value tasks where they clearly have the technical "know-how" but just can't articulate it.

Task 2: interview

The interview task was the strongest performing area for students, with the cohort averaging just under 58% of the available marks. Students were required to conduct an interview with the network manager at Innovate Digital Wave. The purpose of which was to gather information about current communication platform challenges and future requirements.

Many students demonstrated confidence in their interview technique, asking relevant questions about current platform use, known issues, and future requirements.

Strong responses moved beyond their pre-planned questions, building on points raised by the interviewee and developing appropriate follow-up questions. They also demonstrated effective active listening by paraphrasing and summarising responses to confirm understanding. It was pleasing to see students address both the current situation and future requirements, exploring security concerns, remote access needs, system integration, and user training considerations.

Weaker responses tended to ask surface-level questions without following up, to rely on closed-ended questions, and to miss opportunities to explore responses further. Some covered current platform usage adequately but did not proceed to gather requirements for the proposed solution. Providers should give students regular practice in open-ended questioning and develop their active listening skills alongside their technical knowledge.

Task 2: emails

Communicating the interview findings to two different audiences via email proved more challenging for students than the interview itself, with the cohort averaging just under 48% of available marks. Students were required to write one email to a technical audience (their line manager) and one to a non-technical audience (the CEO), each addressing the communication platform issues identified during the interview.

Good responses clearly differentiated their communication style between the two emails. The technical email appropriately used terms such as fragmented workflows, unauthorised data access, and integration challenges. The non-technical email conveyed the same issues in plain language, focusing on business impact and operational disruption.

These students typically identified a broad range of issues in their interviews, including fragmented platform use, difficulties with remote access, security risks, compliance concerns, and an increased IT support burden.

Weaker responses used a similar tone and vocabulary across both emails, failing to adjust to the audience. The technical email often lacked appropriate terminology, while the non-technical email at times contained jargon inaccessible to a non-specialist reader.

A further common weakness was the narrow range of issues identified: many students addressed two or three problems, even though five or more were expected.

Analytical thinking was limited, with students describing issues rather than connecting them to broader business implications. Providers should give students regular practice in audience-adapted technical writing and in synthesising interview findings into a coherent professional communication.

Task 3: project proposal

The project proposal task is worth 24 marks and is designed to distinguish between students who can produce a detailed, evidence-based proposal and those whose responses lack depth. The average score for this task was just under 12 marks. This indicates that many students found it difficult to provide the required level of detail.

Most students demonstrated a basic understanding of the scenario requirements. Most students identified the need for a unified communication platform and made appropriate platform choices - Microsoft Teams was the most common recommendation, given the likely existing Microsoft 365 ecosystem. Most students included some relevant security measures, with MFA and encryption mentioned by the majority, and attempted cost calculations using basic per-user subscription figures.

Weaker proposals lacked depth in multiple crucial areas. Implementation plans were often insufficiently detailed, omitting rollout strategies, pilot testing, and staff training schedules. Security risk assessments identified only two or three issues, even though stronger responses would have been expected, and mitigations were frequently listed without explanation of how they would be applied in practice. Licensing arrangements were addressed superficially, with many students noting only that costs were charged per user per month without exploring licensing tiers or Enterprise features. Justifications were often assertions rather than reasoned arguments grounded in the scenario context. Providers ought to focus on developing students' ability to construct a detailed, evidence-based business case and to distinguish between describing a solution and justifying it.

Task 3: mathematics skills (AO4)

Mathematical skills assessed within the project proposal performed strongly, with the cohort averaging 78% of available marks. Most students correctly performed the basic multiplication required to calculate per-user subscription costs, added category totals, and presented figures in appropriate units and currency.

Whilst this is a positive finding, the strong performance indicates that the required calculations are relatively simple.

Task 4: testing method – audience testing (sample satisfaction survey)

Students were required to design a satisfaction survey to measure user responses to the new communication platform following its implementation at Innovate Digital Wave.

The survey needed to be professionally formatted and suitable for distribution to non-technical users, covering:

- ease of use
- device accessibility
- messaging
- file-sharing effectiveness
- overall contentment.

The cohort averaged just over 3 out of 6 marks on this task. Most students produced a basic survey with some relevant questions and incorporated at least some rating scales.

Higher-achieving students created well-structured surveys covering a broad range of criteria, used a mix of question types including Likert scales, yes/no responses, and open-ended questions, and maintained accessible non-technical language throughout.

Weaker surveys tended to lack professional formatting and contained a limited number of questions. Excessive dependence on yes/no questions rather than scaled responses was common, as was the absence of open-ended opportunities for qualitative input. Technical language that would not be comprehensible to a non-specialist audience appeared in some submissions. Questions were also sometimes too vague to yield meaningful data. Providers should encourage students to consider the purpose of each question type and to carefully assess whether their survey would provide the organisation with genuinely useful information about the implementation's success.

Task 4: post-project review

This task required students to produce a post-project review summarising the original communication issues identified, the solutions implemented, the security mitigations applied, and a self-evaluation of their own performance.

Students tended to provide a reasonable overview of the key issues, identifying fragmented platform use, security risks, and difficulties with remote access. They then summarised their proposed solutions, including:

- migrating to a consolidated platform
- standardising across teams
- implementing MFA access controls.

The task showed the strongest discrimination of any element in Task 4, reflecting that students who could think critically about their own work were clearly distinguishable from those who produced more general responses.

The self-evaluation component was the most challenging aspect for many students. Weaker responses offered only superficial reflection, using statements such as “I did well” or “I could have done better” without reference to specific decisions or outcomes within their own work.

Stronger responses demonstrated genuine critical analysis, discussing both advantages and limitations of their approach, identifying particular areas for improvement, and articulating lessons learned throughout the project.

Security mitigations were sometimes listed without an explanation of how they addressed particular risks.

Tasks 2, 3 and 4: English skills (AO4)

English skills were assessed holistically across written work in Tasks 2, 3, and 4. The cohort achieved an average of 3.15 out of 4, with approximately 78% of available marks, indicating consistently strong literacy performance.

Most students demonstrated good spelling, punctuation, and grammar accuracy throughout their submissions. The majority achieved Band 3 or Band 4 marks, demonstrating mostly accurate or fully accurate technical communication, with an appropriate professional tone and coherent organisation.

Higher-achieving students maintained professional standards across all written outputs, including emails, technical proposals, and reflective summaries. These students adjusted language appropriately for different audiences whilst maintaining clarity and accuracy throughout.

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