T-LEVELS | Institute for Apprenticeships & Technical Education

T Level Technical Qualification in Digital Support Services

SAM

Employer set project (ESP)

Core skills

Digital Support

Mark scheme

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Marking guidelines

General guidelines

You must apply the following marking guidelines to all marking undertaken throughout the marking period. This is to ensure fairness to all students, who must receive the same treatment. You must mark the first student in exactly the same way as you mark the last:

- the mark scheme must be referred to throughout the marking period and applied consistently – do not change your approach to marking once you have been standardised
- reward students positively giving credit for what they have shown, rather than what they might have omitted
- utilise the whole mark range and always award full marks when the response merits them
- be prepared to award zero marks if the student's response has no creditworthy material
- do not credit irrelevant material that does not answer the question, no matter how impressive the response might be
- the marks awarded for each response should be clearly and legibly recorded in the grid on the front of the question paper
- if you are in any doubt about the application of the mark scheme, you must consult with your team leader or the chief examiner

Guidelines for using extended response marking grids

Extended response marking grids have been designed to award a student's response holistically for the relevant task or question and should follow a best-fit approach. The grids are broken down into bands, with each band having an associated descriptor indicating the performance at that band. You should determine the level before determining the mark.

When determining a band, you should look at the overall quality of the response and reward students positively, rather than focussing on small omissions. If the response covers aspects at different levels, you should use a best-fit approach at this stage and use the available marks within the level to credit the response appropriately.

When determining a mark, your decision should be based on the quality of the response in relation to the descriptors. Standardisation materials, marked by the chief examiner, will help you with determining a mark. You will be able to use exemplar student responses to compare to live responses, to decide if it is the same, better, or worse.

To support your judgement, the indicative content is structured in such a way that mirrors the order of the different points within the band descriptors. This will allow you to use the 2 in conjunction with each other by providing examples of the types of things to look for in the response, for each descriptor. In other words, the indicative content provides you with a starting point of possible examples and the bands express the range of options available to you in terms of the quality of the response. You should apply the standards that have been set at relevant standardisation events in a consistent manner.

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You are reminded that the indicative content provided under the marking grid is there as a guide, and therefore, you must credit any other suitable responses a student may produce. It is not a requirement either, that students must cover all of the indicative content to be awarded full marks.

For some tasks, there is more than one piece of assessment evidence required. Whilst they are interconnected, markers should assess each piece of assessment evidence in its own right, using the appropriate mark scheme to inform the marks awarded.

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Task 1

This task requires students to submit 2 pieces of assessment evidence. Whilst they are linked in terms of the task scenario, they should be marked independently of each other using the marking grids and indicative content detailed below.

Task 1: troubleshooting document

Band	Mark	Descriptor
3	5–6	The student provides a response to the task that: • demonstrates an excellent understanding of troubleshooting with a highly logical structure, including a wide range of highly relevant steps that may be used to identify the computer faults that are comprehensive and highly detailed • demonstrates an excellent understanding of the troubleshooting process by showing expected results of troubleshooting steps that are comprehensive and highly detailed
2	3–4	The student provides a response to the task that: • demonstrates a reasonable understanding of troubleshooting with some logical structure, including some relevant steps that may be used to identify the computer faults that have some detail, though they may be underdeveloped • demonstrates a reasonable understanding of the troubleshooting process by showing expected results of troubleshooting steps that have some detail, though they may be underdeveloped
1	1–2	The student provides a response to the task that: • demonstrates a limited understanding of troubleshooting with minimal structure, including a minimal range of steps that may lack relevance to identify the computer faults and have minimal detail • demonstrates a limited understanding of the troubleshooting process by showing expected results of troubleshooting steps that have minimal detail
0	0	No creditworthy material.

Indicative content

Students may propose a range of steps on the call log sheet to troubleshoot the problem, such as:

- verify hard disk connections
- review hard disk settings in the BIOS
- verify IP settings
- check the fault log
- run a disk check

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- run a disk clean up
- review disk management

The expected outcomes of the troubleshooting steps will vary depending on the steps proposed by the student, but these may include:

- the reason behind the issue is that the partition had been set to small, as a result not enough disk space was provided to install the productivity suite

Note: this list is not exhaustive; please credit any other valid steps the student may recommend.

Task 1: test plan document

Band	Mark	Descriptor
4	13–16	The student provides a response to the task that: • has an excellent design with a highly logical structure that includes a wide range of elements and/or appropriate steps to test the suggested changes have resolved the fault • demonstrates an excellent understanding of faults (in relation to the scenario of the brief), supported by an excellent range of highly relevant tests • demonstrates an excellent understanding of testing (in relation to the scenario of the brief), supported by a comprehensive and highly detailed explanation of expected outcomes
3	9–12	The student provides a response to the task that: • has a good design with a mostly logical structure that includes most elements and/or appropriate steps to test the suggested changes have resolved the fault • demonstrates a good understanding of faults (in relation to the scenario of the brief), supported by a good range of mostly relevant tests • demonstrates a good understanding of testing (in relation to the scenario of the brief), supported by a clear and mostly detailed explanation of expected outcomes
2	5–8	The student provides a response to the task that: • has a reasonable design with some logical structure, though this may be underdeveloped, that includes most elements and/or appropriate steps to test the suggested changes have resolved the fault • demonstrates a reasonable understanding of faults (in relation to the scenario of the brief), supported by a reasonable range of some relevant tests (though may include some inappropriate tests) • demonstrates a reasonable understanding of testing (in relation to the scenario of the brief), supported by an explanation of expected outcomes that has some detail, though this may be underdeveloped
1	1–4	The student provides a response to the task that:

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		• has a limited design with minimal structure that includes minimal elements and/or appropriate steps to test the suggested changes have resolved the fault • demonstrates a limited understanding of faults (in relation to the scenario of the brief), supported by a limited range of mostly irrelevant tests • demonstrates a limited understanding of testing (in relation to the scenario of the brief), supported by a minimal explanation of expected outcomes with limited detail
0	0	No creditworthy material.

Indicative content

Students may make different decisions when designing their test plan. Credit should be given for the clarity and appropriateness of the outlined steps in relation to the brief.

The test plan design features may include:

- consistent formatting
- the structure is clear and easy to understand (for example, fonts are readable)
- a simple list
- appropriate use of tables to lay out tests, expected results/actual results, to be easily understood which may include fields such as:
  - user details
  - test dates
  - proposed tests
  - expected outcomes of tests
  - ability to record changes based on test outcomes
  - user acceptance of work completed

The actual fault is the USB disabled in the BIOS.

Students may propose a range of different steps to test the suggested changes have resolved the fault. When considering placement within the bands, consideration should be given to the appropriateness of the selected tests in context of the actual fault. The types of tests proposed by students may include:

- test cable connections
- test alternative ports
- if a PS/2 mouse and keyboard is an option
- alternative keyboard and mouse
- BIOS Rollback
- OS rollback to a previous state
- boot into safe mode to test USB devices
- test with a different USB device

SAMPLE

- check USB settings in the BIOS

The expected outcomes of tests will vary depending on the types of tests proposed by students, but these may include:

- computer boots and loads operating system correctly
- computer is stable and no longer crashes
- the USB devices work

Note: this list is not exhaustive; please credit any other valid tests the student may recommend.

SAMPLE

Task 2

This task requires students to submit 2 pieces of assessment evidence. Whilst they are linked in terms of the task scenario, they should be marked independently of each other using the marking grids and indicative content detailed below.

Note: Tasks 2, 3, and 4 assess English skills holistically. The AO4 English skills mark scheme is detailed after task 4, though it may be useful to refer to the mark scheme whilst assessing the tasks to support an appropriate, holistic judgement.

SAMPLE

Task 2: interview

Band	Mark	Descriptor
3	5–6	The student provides a response to the task that: • demonstrates an excellent application of communication techniques when working with stakeholders to address specific requirements (in relation to the scenario of the brief) • demonstrates an excellent understanding of root cause analysis by constructing interview questions that are highly logical, highly relevant, and facilitate a comprehensive gathering of information on the issues (in relation to the scenario of the brief)
2	3–4	The student provides a response to the task that: • demonstrates a reasonable application of communication techniques when working with stakeholders to address specific requirements (in relation to the scenario of the brief) • demonstrates a reasonable understanding of root cause analysis by constructing interview questions that have some logic, some relevance, and facilitate some gathering of information on the issues (in relation to the scenario of the brief), though these may be underdeveloped
1	1–2	The student provides a response to the task that: • demonstrates a limited application of communication techniques when working with stakeholders to address specific requirements (in relation to the scenario of the brief) • demonstrates a limited understanding of root cause analysis by constructing interview questions that have minimal logic, minimal relevance, and facilitate minimal gathering of information on the issues (in relation to the scenario of the brief)
0	0	No creditworthy material.

Indicative content

The recorded interview shows the student questioning the Head of IT.

The student's communication technique, as well as their ability to respond to information they receive during the interview, should be considered.

The communication techniques demonstrated by the response may include:

- active listening
- use of open questioning
- negotiation
- use of clear and concise language (for example, terminology based on audience)

The questions asked by students will demonstrate their ability to analyse the key issues, in relation to the brief. Credit should be given for the quality of the questions asked in terms of how it helps to identify the current issues.

- questions related to the proposed working practices:
    - what will the sales team be doing on the computer

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  - what would they need a tablet for
  - why the admin team require a different setup to the sales team
  - will the WIFI be available to all users eg staff and customers

- questions related to requirement gathering:
  - what are the system requirements for the sales team and administrative computers
  - will you require any additional peripherals, eg printers
  - will on premise servers be required for the company? And if so, what roles will they provide
  - what other requirements will you have for the project
  - will the staff require training

Note: this list is not exhaustive; credit should be given to other questions which enable an appropriate response.

SAMPLE

Task 2: emails

Band	Mark	Descriptor
3	5–6	The student provides a response to the task that: • demonstrates an excellent understanding of how to communicate to different audiences in a digital support services context, this is supported by sustained application of relevant technical terminology (for the technical audience), and is contextualised (for the non-technical audience) in a comprehensive and highly detailed way • demonstrates an excellent application of analytical thinking and problem solving that identifies a wide range of issues (in relation to the scenario of the brief) in a comprehensive and highly detailed way
2	3–4	The student provides a response to the task that: • demonstrates a reasonable understanding of how to communicate to different audiences in a digital support services context, this is supported by some application of relevant technical terminology (for the technical audience), and contextualised (for the non-technical audience) with some detail • demonstrates a reasonable application of analytical thinking and problem solving that identifies some of the issues (in relation to the scenario of the brief) with some detail, though this may be underdeveloped
1	1–2	The student provides a response to the task that: • demonstrates a limited understanding of how to communicate to different audiences in a digital support services context, this is supported by minimal or no application of relevant technical terminology (for the technical audience), and is contextualised (for the non-technical audience) in a superficial way • demonstrates a limited application of analytical thinking and problem solving that identifies a minimal range of issues (in relation to the scenario of the brief) that has minimal detail
0	0	No creditworthy material.

Indicative content

The two emails communicate to different types of audiences within a digital support services context. Credit should be given for how the student uses technical terminology according to the intended audience. Different types of communication methods may include:

- informal or formal writing styles
- appropriate language used for the relevant audience
- technical email:
  - more direct, uses technical terminology and acronyms appropriately, for example, a lack of MDM software prevents us from monitoring or controlling the software on computers as well as security compliance
- non-technical email
  - more straightforward, descriptive of concepts and avoids technical jargon, for example, a lack of a central tool for monitoring and managing remote computers means it is hard to track that computers are being used correctly and that they are being kept up to date

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Credit should be given to the appropriateness and number of issues discussed. Potential issues, as related to the scenario, that may be identified through the application of analytical thinking and problem solving may include:

- lack of ability to manage remote computers
- security issues related to staff using their own computers that are totally unmonitored/uncontrolled
- inconsistency of web conferencing facilities, leading to a sprawl of apps on computers
- inconsistency of web conferencing facilities, leading to the possibility of insecure or inappropriate solutions being chosen
- company data being placed on personal devices is a GDPR risk

Note: this is not an exhaustive list; credit should be given to other concerns that may be identified.

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Task 3

Alongside the main assessment evidence (project proposal), task 3 assesses mathematics skills. The AO4 mathematics skills mark scheme is detailed after task 3.

Note: Tasks 2, 3, and 4 assess English skills holistically. The AO4 English skills mark scheme is detailed after task 4, though it may be useful to refer to the mark scheme whilst assessing the tasks to support an appropriate, holistic judgement.

Task 3: project proposal

Band	Mark	Descriptor
5	20–24	The student provides a response to the task that: • demonstrates an excellent understanding of the computer set-up and software issues (in relation to the scenario of the brief) that is comprehensive and highly detailed • demonstrates an excellent understanding of how to resolve the computer set-up and software issues, and address needs (in relation to the scenario of the brief) that is comprehensive and highly detailed • makes judgements on the equipment, software, and/or cloud services and associated costs to meet needs (in relation to the scenario of the brief) that are comprehensive and highly relevant • demonstrates an excellent understanding of associated cyber security issues and how they could be mitigated (in relation to the scenario of the brief) that is comprehensive and highly detailed
4	15–19	The student provides a response to the task that: • demonstrates a good understanding of the computer set-up and software issues (in relation to the scenario of the brief) that is clear and mostly detailed • demonstrates a good understanding of how to resolve the computer set-up and software issues, and address needs (in relation to the scenario of the brief) that is clear and mostly detailed • makes judgements on the equipment, software, and/or cloud services and associated costs to meet needs (in relation to the scenario of the brief) that are clear and mostly relevant • demonstrates a good understanding of associated cyber security issues and how they could be mitigated (in relation to the scenario of the brief) that is clear and mostly detailed
3	10–14	The student provides a response to the task that: • demonstrates a reasonable understanding of the computer set-up and software issues (in relation to the scenario of the brief) that has some detail, though this may be underdeveloped

SAMPLE

Band	Mark	Descriptor
		• demonstrates a reasonable understanding of how to resolve the computer set-up and software issues, and address needs (in relation to the scenario of the brief) that has some detail, though this may be underdeveloped • makes judgements on the equipment, software, and/or cloud services and associated costs to meet needs (in relation to the scenario of the brief) that have some relevance • demonstrates a reasonable understanding of associated cyber security issues and how they could be mitigated (in relation to the scenario of the brief) that has some detail, though this may be underdeveloped
2	5–9	The student provides a response to the task that: • demonstrates a basic understanding of the computer set-up and software issues (in relation to the scenario of the brief) that is sometimes unclear and lacks detail • demonstrates a basic understanding of how to resolve the computer set-up and software issues, and address needs (in relation to the scenario of the brief) that is sometimes unclear and lacks detail • makes judgements on the equipment, software, and/or cloud services and associated costs to meet needs (in relation to the scenario of the brief) that are sometimes unclear and irrelevant • demonstrates a basic understanding of associated cyber security issues and how they could be mitigated (in relation to the scenario of the brief) that is sometimes unclear and lacks detail
1	1–4	The student provides a response to the task that: • demonstrates a limited understanding of the computer set-up and software issues (in relation to the scenario of the brief) that is mostly unclear with minimal detail • demonstrates a limited understanding of how to resolve the computer set-up and software issues, and address needs (in relation to the scenario of the brief) that is mostly unclear with minimal detail • makes judgements on the equipment, software, and/or cloud services and associated costs to meet needs (in relation to the scenario of the brief) that are mostly unclear and irrelevant • demonstrates a limited understanding of associated cyber security issues and how they could be mitigated (in relation to the scenario of the brief) that is mostly unclear with minimal detail
0	0	No creditworthy material.

Indicative content

As this scenario is not about any form of upgrade of existing systems and with the lack of any budget, the student will have a degree of flexibility in how they approach and solve the problem.

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The requirements discussed may include:

- the flexibility for the sales team to work at the desk or around the dealership
- ability to deploy and manage mobile devices and desktops
- the requirement of peripherals and the specialist desktop hardware for the sales team
- training requirements of staff on the new systems
- mobile device management and server requirements on-site
- GDPR and security issues surrounding personal computer usage

Students may provide a range of different options to deliver on the scenario. When considering placement within the bands, consideration should be given to the appropriateness and number of issues discussed. Potential solutions may include:

- selection and specification of the two sets of computers and the specific wide screen all in one computer for the sales team
- the selection of tablets, based on the requirement to implement mobile device management (MDM) software such as, Microsoft Intune to manage remote devices
- suitable operating systems and compatibility between servers, desktops, and tablets based on the demand of the task
- recommendations of the different printers required for the dealership
- Introducing a consistent endpoint protection solution to ensure up-to-date anti-malware software and central management of it
- use of cloud-based solutions such as Microsoft 365 for productivity or other installed productivity packages

Capable students may well provide a diverse solution that utilises products from multiple vendors depending on use in the business.

Students may make different decisions when proposing different equipment, software, server, and cloud-based services. Credit should be given for the strength of their decisions and justifications.

Possible judgements may include:

- installation of MDM software across all computers
    - allows management of computers and mobile devices remotely
    - allows provisioning of software to allow future software rollouts
    - allows monitoring of computer usage and ensures security software is updated
- creation of a standardised Windows image
- use of Microsoft 365 to provide productivity software/email/cloud-based storage
    - allows use of Teams for communication
    - allows use of cloud storage for file storage
    - allows use of SharePoint for resource management

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- installation of a full endpoint protection solution to force anti-virus and anti-malware compliance across all computers

Costing decisions will vary as students may offer different proposals to resolve the issues. However, costings should be included (please also assess mathematics skills and refer to the AO4 mark scheme, detailed below, to inform judgement) and may include:

- subscription costs for cloud-based solutions (for example, Microsoft 365)
- capital costs for new or updated computers or servers
- software licensing costs for software such as endpoint protection software

Students may provide different cyber security considerations based on their decisions. Possible cyber security and mitigations may include:

- cyber security: users have local administrative rights on workstations
    - mitigation: introduction of centralised management through MDM and removal of local admin permissions for end users
- cyber security: lack of malware and anti-virus software on local clients
    - mitigation: introduction of an endpoint protection solution to centrally manage anti-virus updates on client computers
- cyber security: out –of date operating system with no control on updates being applied
    - MDM software forces security compliance

Security considerations that may include, but are not limited to:

- ensure anti-virus software is up –to date
- centralised control of all devices
- full control of software licensing
- modern operating systems with all security patches being installed

Note: this is not an exhaustive list; credit should be given to other suggestions as appropriate.

SAMPLE

Task 3: mathematics skills (AO4)

Band	Mark	Descriptor
2	2	Mathematics skills presented in the task: • demonstrate a good understanding of numeracy skills which show accurate calculations and appropriate units
1	1	Mathematics skills presented in the task: • demonstrate a basic understanding of numeracy skills with calculations that may sometimes be inaccurate with some inappropriate units
0	0	No creditworthy material.

Indicative content

The project proposal includes costings for the suggested equipment as stated by the student.

SAMPLE

Task 4

This task requires students to submit 2 pieces of assessment evidence. Whilst they are linked in terms of the task scenario, they should be marked independently of each other using the marking grids and indicative content detailed below.

Note: tasks 2, 3, and 4 assess English skills holistically. The AO4 English skills mark scheme is detailed after task 4, though it may be useful to refer to the mark scheme whilst assessing the tasks to support an appropriate, holistic judgement.

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

Band	Mark	Descriptor
3	5–6	The student provides a response to the task that: • demonstrates an excellent understanding of testing methods, in relation to the scenario of the brief, that could measure the effectiveness of the solution in a comprehensive and highly detailed way
2	3–4	The student provides a response to the task that: • demonstrates a reasonable understanding of testing methods, in relation to the scenario of the brief, that could measure the effectiveness of the solution in some detail, though this may be underdeveloped
1	1–2	The student provides a response to the task that: • demonstrates a limited understanding of testing methods, in relation to the scenario of the brief, that could measure the effectiveness of the solution in a minimal and superficial way
0	0	No creditworthy material.

Indicative content

The required testing method for this task focuses on audience testing in the form of a sample satisfaction survey.

Credit should be given for the ability of the questions to determine whether the functionality fulfils the desired outcomes, as well as user satisfaction with the new network.

Students may include a range of questions with different areas of focus, such as:

- questions to measure user satisfaction:
  - how satisfied are you with the new network set-up
  - how would you rate the ease of use when accessing resources
  - how easy do you find your computer to use
  - are you able to access the files and folders you need within system
  - how efficient is the performance of your computer

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  - what software (if any) would you like to see included in future updates
  - how efficient was the installation process for you
- questions to measure system performance:
  - how would you rate the usability of your computer
  - are you able to connect to all resources you require
  - how would you rate the compatibility of your software
- questions to understand the user:
  - what is your job role
  - how would you rate your technical ability

SAMPLE

Task 4: post-project review

Band	Mark	Descriptor
3	5–6	The student provides a response to the task that: • demonstrates an excellent understanding of the key issues, solutions, health and safety, and security factors (in relation to the scenario of the brief), supported by sustained application of relevant technical terminology appropriate for a technical audience • evaluates their own performance throughout the project in an excellent and highly detailed manner, supported by excellent explanations of actions taken and proposed solutions (in relation to the scenario of the brief)
2	3–4	The student provides a response to the task that: • demonstrates a reasonable understanding of the key issues, solutions, health and safety, and security factors (in relation to the scenario of the brief), supported by some application of relevant technical terminology appropriate for a technical audience • evaluates their own performance throughout the project in a reasonable manner with some detail, though this may be underdeveloped, supported by reasonable explanations of actions taken and proposed solutions (in relation to the scenario of the brief)
1	1–2	The student provides a response to the task that: • demonstrates a limited understanding of the key issues, solutions, health and safety, and security factors (in relation to the scenario of the brief), supported by minimal or no application of relevant technical terminology appropriate for a technical audience • evaluates their own performance throughout the project in a limited and superficial manner, supported by limited explanations of actions taken and proposed solutions (in relation to the scenario of the brief)
0	0	No creditworthy material.

Indicative content

The project summary consolidates the key aspects of the project and may include:

- the key problem presented in the scenario
- proposed solutions such as:
  - consistent operating systems across all computers
  - standardised software across all computers
  - use of a deployment server and strategy to automate installation across all computers
  - introduction of a consistent endpoint protection solution to ensure up –to date anti-malware software and the central management of it
  - cloud-based solutions such as Microsoft 365 or Google Docs
- mitigations used throughout the project

SAMPLE

- relevant security issues, such as:
  - lack of consistent virus/malware protection
  - end users having access to administrative permissions allowing installation of unauthorised software and providing high-level threat if an account is compromised

Students may evaluate their own performance in a range of ways, this may include:

- discussion of strengths and weaknesses, as relevant to their own choices
- application of relevant reflective models, Gibbs' Reflective Cycle

Note: this is not an exhaustive list; credit should be given to other appropriate evaluative approaches.

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

Band	Mark	Descriptor
4	4	English skills presented in the tasks: • demonstrate an excellent understanding of spelling, punctuation, and grammar that is fully accurate • demonstrate an excellent ability to convey meaning in a fully clear and coherent manner
3	3	English skills presented in the tasks: • demonstrate a good understanding of spelling, punctuation, and grammar that is mostly accurate • demonstrate a good ability to convey meaning in a mostly clear manner
2	2	English skills presented in the tasks: • demonstrate a reasonable understanding of spelling, punctuation, and grammar that has some accuracy, though errors may be present • demonstrate a reasonable ability to convey meaning, though at times, this may not be fully clear
1	1	English skills presented in the tasks: • demonstrate a limited understanding of spelling, punctuation, and grammar that is mostly inaccurate • demonstrate a limited ability to convey meaning in a mostly unclear manner
0	0	No creditworthy material.

Indicative content

The student has submitted emails, a project proposal, survey, and project review. A holistic judgement should be made in terms of the quality of English skills throughout tasks 2, 3, and 4.

English skills may include:

- identifying relevant information from the brief and organising writing into an appropriate format (for example, paragraphs, bullet points)
- conveying meaning and information clearly and effectively, supported by language which is appropriate for the audience (for example, team leader/facilities manager – formal language)
- constructing complex sentences consistently and accurately
- using correct spelling, grammar, and punctuation

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Change History Record

Version	Description of change	Approval	Date of Issue
v1.0	Published		September 2022
v1.1	Sample added as a watermark.	November 2023	17 November 2023

SAMPLE