

Chief examiner's report

**T Level Technical Qualification in
Digital Support Services (Level 3)
(603/6901/2)**

Summer 2023 – Core A and B

Chief examiner's report

Summer 2023 – Core A and B

Assessment dates: **Core A – 14 June 2023**

Core B – 21 June 2023

Paper number: **P001639**

P001641

This report contains information in relation to the externally assessed core sub-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 exam until they have received the relevant teaching of the qualification in relation to this sub-component, and that both papers must be taken in any given series that a student sits the core exam.

Grade boundaries

Raw mark grade boundaries for the series are:

	Overall	Notional boundaries	
		Paper A P001639	Paper B P001641
Max	237	106	131
A*	204	92	111
A	79	83	96
B	154	71	83
C	130	59	70
D	106	48	57
E	82	37	45

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

Students receive a grade for the core exam sub-component as 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 available on the qualification page of our NCFE website.

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

Standard of student work

In this series, students generally performed well. Overall, students answered the majority of questions across paper A and B. However, there were some providers where chunks of questions were not answered by a large number of students.

There was a range of achievement seen throughout, including some exceptional answers on the 15 mark questions from a small selection of students/providers.

Responses to the external assessment questions

Core paper A

Section A: Business context and culture

It was pleasing to see, students generally performed well within this section.

Q1: The majority of students answered this question correctly.

Q2: Students clearly understood this question and were able to successfully identify a suitable mitigation technique.

Q3: Students were able to explain one way that digital technology could impact upon the company's culture, albeit some students only achieved the first half marks due to not fully explaining the answer fully. For example, 'a reduction in face-to-face meetings could have a negative impact on creativity or sharing ideas (1) and therefore this may reduce the productivity and output of the business (1)'.

Q4 (a): Students on a whole successfully described the terms 'digital footprint' and 'surveillance'; however, for Q4 (b), often struggled explaining how one of these aspects of digital security would help address the focus group's concern around loss of privacy. For example, 'as the devices are marketed as 'easy-to-use', the company should also make it easy and intuitive for the users of its devices to remove any personal information (1), such as browsing history or personal preferences. There should be clear instructions provided in a variety of formats to users when they purchase the devices and this could be made part of the marketing message (1)'.

Q5: Most students could clearly identify components of the SMARTER objectives.

Q6: Students generally understood this question well and could explain how one of the risks could affect the new classroom platform.

Q7: Good understanding of this question, with good responses and examples given.

Q8: Students performed very well on this question and could successfully achieve the 3 marks awarded.

Q9: This was a 6-mark question, and students were able to clearly justify 6 points for this question. The level of understanding on this question was evidenced clearly in the majority of responses.

Q10: Was a 15-mark question (12 overall for the question and 3 quality of written communication (QWC)). On the whole, students found this section relatively easy to complete; however, most lacked detail and comprehensive knowledge on the topic. The QWC as a whole was good.

Section B: Diversity, inclusion and digital environments

Students performed better in the first half of this section. Some comments on each of the questions within this section:

Q11: Most students achieved the full 1 mark for this question, excellent knowledge.

Q12: Students showed excellent understanding of types of networks, with the majority achieving the full 2 marks.

Q13 (a): Students successfully identified 2 methods of creating a resilient digital environment; however, for Q13 (b), most students did not achieve the full 2 marks for this second part of the question. Examples of a suitable response for Q13 (b) would be: 'by ensuring that software is updated on a regular basis, Natalia could ensure that the digital environment is running to maximum performance (1), which would mean that staff could run more than one software application at a time without experiencing loss of time/productivity (1)'.

Q14: Students showed good understanding of innovative and inclusive seen within this question, with most achieving full marks.

Q15: Students as a whole successfully explained the 2 approaches within this question. Students have a good understanding of the topics within the question.

Q16: Students knowledge on SaaS was obvious within this question, as the majority answered this question very well. Where students lost marks was failing to point out 3 individual discussion points.

Q17: Some students achieved the correct marks for this 2-part question. However, not all students were aware of routing protocols, nor able to explain how it can be used.

Q18: Many students lost marks with this question, due to students lacking justification in their response. Many students' responses were comparing Windows to Mac, rather than justifying which is the most suitable for Marco and his laptop.

Q19: Many students lost the full 3 marks for this question, due to failing to provide 3 analysis points within their answer. Most students simply stopped at one or two points.

Q20: Was a 15-mark question (12 overall for the question and 3 QWC). On the whole, students found this section relatively straight-forward to complete. Answers were mostly relevant, but often lost focus. The QWC as a whole was good.

Section C: Learning and planning

Students performed relatively well within this section, with some high marks awarded for some questions.

Q21: Students performed well on this question, with most achieving the full 2 marks.

Q22: Students had good understanding of this question and were able to explain this answer very well.

Q23: The majority of students answered this question well, achieving the full marks allocated.

Q24: The majority of students answered this question well, achieving the full marks allocated.

Q25 (a) and (b): The majority of students possibly mis-understood the question here. The question was looking for students to identify 'emerging technologies', such as artificial intelligence (AI), internet of things and virtual reality (VR). However, the majority of students listed ways how a smart phone could record their fitness, whereas this was a response expected to be seen in Q25 (b).

Q26: Students on the whole answered this question well and achieved full marks.

Q27: Whilst the majority of students seemed to understand what MoSCoW was, they lacked in assessing 3 points within their answer. Most students assessed one or maybe two points, which failed them achieving higher marks for this question.

Core paper B

Section A: Digital Support Services pathway

It was pleasing to see so many students achieve high marks within this section.

Q1: This question was answered correctly throughout the majority of answers marked.

Q2: This question was understood and answered well, with many students achieving full marks for this question.

Q3 to Q6: As a whole, these questions were generally answered correctly for the majority of students, whereby students achieved full marks for these questions.

Q7: Students often failed to achieve the full 3 marks for this question, due to missing out on 3 analysis points. Many students provided one or two analysis points for this question, therefore, failing to achieve the full 3 marks awarded.

Q8: Similarly to Q7, students failed to provide 3 analysis points for this question, often resulting in only one or two points mentioned.

Q9: This question was understood and answered well by the majority of students.

Section B: Tools and testing

It was pleasing to see so many students achieve high marks within this section, with just some questions that lacked in detail:

Q10 and Q11: These questions were answered correctly for most students.

Q12: Students had good explanations for this question, with many achieving the full 2 marks.

Q13: Many students identified 2 components on a Gantt chart, but often failed to achieve the further 2 marks by explaining how they could be used. For example: 'a time scale should be included as it will identify the overall time allocated so that the app is ready for launch in the summer (1), providing a visual marker for each phase / activity of the project so that the project manager can monitor progress (1)'.

Q14: Students often failed to achieve the full 3 marks for this question, due to missing out on 3 analysis points. Many students provided one or two analysis points for this question, therefore, failing to achieve the full 3 awarded.

Q15 and Q16: These questions were understood and answered well, with many students achieving full marks for these questions.

Q17: Students often failed to achieve the full 4 marks for this question, due to missing out on 4 justification points. Many students provided one or two analysis points for this question, therefore, failing to achieve the full 4 awarded.

Section C: Security and legislation

It was pleasing to see so many students achieve high marks within this section, with just some questions that lacked in detail:

Q18: The majority of students answered this question correctly.

Q19: The majority of students struggled to achieve the 1 mark for this question, by incorrectly identifying the correct regulation.

Q20: Students successfully identified suitable data security measures for this question. However, failed to achieve the full 2 marks by lacking in explaining each one. For example: 'Superbytz Ltd should put in place organisational policies / physical / technical measures when collecting, processing and storing data (1). This would mean introducing measures such as encryption when gathering customer details through an online form (1)'.

Q21: Students often failed to achieve the full 3 marks for this question, due to missing out on 3 analysis points. Many students provided one or two analysis points for this question, therefore, failing to achieve the full 3 awarded.

Q22: Students often failed to achieve the full 3 marks for this question, due to missing out on 3 assessment points. Many students provided one or two assessment points for this question, therefore, failing to achieve the full 3 awarded.

Q23: Many students achieved full marks for this question.

Q24 (a) and (b): Many students for this question unfortunately did not identify methods of multi-factor authentication (MFA), such as, fingerprint, one time passcode, biometrics. For those that did identify these responses, they often failed to achieve full marks for Q24 (b) by failing to explain how it can be used. For example: 'the bank could configure their banking app to require a one-time passcode, sent via SMS, for Jack to enter before providing him account access (1 AO2). This will add a level of security because access to the account would need the one-time passcode as well as Jack's username and password (1 AO2)'.

Q25: The majority of students answered this question correctly.

Q26: The majority of students answered this question correctly.

Q27: Students often failed to achieve the full 3 marks for this question, due to missing out on 3 assessment points. Many students provided one or two assessment points for this question, therefore, failing to achieve the full 3 awarded.

Q28: Was a 15-mark question (12 overall for the question and 3 QWC). On the whole, students found this section relatively straight-forward to complete. Answers were mostly good, with relevant knowledge of security vulnerabilities. However, the answers lacked in detailed understanding. More depth within the answers would have provided further marks for this question. The QWC as a whole was good.

Section D: Data and digital analysis

Students performed relatively well within this section, with some high marks awarded for some questions.

Q29: The majority of students answered this question correctly, and clearly understand computational thinking.

Q30: This question often lost students some marks. The reason being, is that the question clearly relates to a given scenario (Chloe's simple online calculator). However, the responses the students gave were generic characteristics of algorithms, rather than the algorithm that Chloe created (which is what the question is relating to). Students need to be careful to ensure they read the question fully, to ensure they can optimise their marks.

Q31 (a) and (b): Part (a) within this question was answered well by the majority, albeit some students lost marks for part (b), failing to explain the answer they identified.

Q32: Students often lost marks within this section, due to students stating that 'pseudocode is easier to understand'. This is unfortunately not what was asked for within the question. The answer should have been similar to the following: 'Biometric Bright would use pseudo code to outline the step-by-step process of the system requirements, such as monitoring the attendance of employees at the manufacturing company by recording their entry and exit times at the workplace (1)'. This question is an AO3 question, whereby the students are required to assess their response.

Q33: Students often failed to achieve the full 3 marks for this question, due to missing out on 3 assessment points. Many students provided one or two assessment points for this question, therefore, failing to achieve the full 3 marks awarded.

Q34: The majority of students answered this question correctly, and clearly understand data types.

Q35: Students often failed to achieve the full 4 marks for this question, due to missing out on 4 assessment points. Many students provided one or two assessment points for this question, therefore, failing to achieve the full 4 marks awarded.

Q36: This question was answered generally correctly on the whole, albeit some students lost marks for part (b), failing to explain their answer.

Q37: This was the final 15-mark question. The majority of students had some good knowledge on this topic of presenting data. There were some detailed methods explained within this response. Students generally achieved high marks for this question. QWC was generally good, albeit students would benefit from writing in full sentences and ensuring high use of technical language within their response.

Administering the external assessment

The external assessment is invigilated and must be conducted in line with our [Regulations for the Conduct of External Assessment](#).

Students must be given the resources to complete the assessment, and these are highlighted within the [Qualification Specific Instructions for Delivery \(QSID\)](#).