

UNIT 1: PRESENTING INFORMATION (ADVANCED)

ABOUT THIS UNIT

This unit helps you to:

- create original documents in styles that suit the users
- improve the accuracy, readability and presentational quality of documents you create
- understand some of the ways organisations present and gather information
- understand why organisations use standard layouts for documents
- choose and apply standard layouts
- understand the need for standard ways of working
- develop good practice in your use of ICT.

You will use your presentation knowledge and skills to create a portfolio of different documents and an extended report on an investigation you have carried out. You will also evaluate a collection of standard documents used by organisations.

This unit provides the basis for all the other units.

The unit also builds on the work done in Unit 1: Presenting information (Intermediate).

This unit provides knowledge, skills and understanding in using IT NVQ level 3.

You will become familiar with, and observe, appropriate aspects of health and safety associated with the use of ICT as defined in British and European legislation. You will learn to appreciate environmental issues relevant to the use of ICT in contemporary society.

You may, for instance, organise your time so that you do not actively use the computer system for long continuous periods, or use Polaroid screen covers. You will also be aware of ergonomic considerations such as style of chair, desk surface texture and lighting.

You will become aware of various aspects of spiritual, moral, ethical, social and cultural activities and beliefs.

You are not, for instance, allowed to use ICT to publish, present or transmit to others material which is pornographic, issues threats, is libellous, contravenes the Race Relations Acts, discloses confidential information or is blasphemous.

When undertaking work you need to be aware of the sensitivities of others as well as the specific laws of the countries in which your work may appear.

If you are using information gathered from an organisation, it is at least unethical, and possibly illegal, to pass on confidential information to another organisation.

This unit will be assessed through your portfolio work only. The grade awarded will be your grade for the unit.

WHAT YOU NEED TO LEARN

The topics are:

- styles of writing and use of language
- accuracy and readability
- styles of presentation
- how organisations gather and present information
- standard ways of working.

Styles of writing and use of language

You know what you want to communicate. How will you express it? There are two important things to remember when preparing information:

- your reader
- the purpose of your document.

You will need to be aware of your reader by using the right kind of language. Unusual words might impress the reader of a job application, but they might annoy someone reading directions to your house. You must also consider the purpose of your document by thinking about the style of language to use. Formal purposes demand a formal style.

Sometimes a communication is designed to collect information from people. Examples are invoices, time sheets, questionnaires and forms such as those used to apply for a driving licence or passport. Forms of this kind need to use simple but clear language. You must learn to use appropriate language and presentation layout to create forms that are easy to understand and easy to complete correctly.

You will use different writing styles to meet different needs. You must learn how the following needs and document structures affect writing style:

- attracting attention
- setting out facts clearly
- writing to impress
- creating a questionnaire
- ordering or invoicing goods
- summarising information
- preparing a draft
- collecting information from individuals
- explaining technical details
- writing a reminder
- preparing a report.

There are tools to help with style. Some assess the reading age that a passage requires. If the reading level seems too high, you can try shorter sentences and simpler words. With some tools you can choose a writing style such as business letter, memo, advertising or report. The advice you get matches the style you have chosen. Other tools, such as a thesaurus, help you to replace particular words with more appropriate ones.

You must learn to judge the strengths and weaknesses of these tools. This will help you to improve the readability of your presentations. Thinking about the writing style of some of the following examples may help:

- a form for an opinion poll
- a league table of results for a sporting activity
- a draft outline of the results of a survey
- a report to colleagues of a meeting that you attended on their behalf
- a questionnaire
- a curriculum vitae (CV)
- a formal letter responding to a job advertisement
- an agenda for a meeting in a sports and social club
- minutes of a meeting for a sports and social club
- a newspaper advertisement to sell something second-hand
- a formal invitation to a party or other special event
- a glossy single-page advertisement for some new cosmetics
- an e-mail to a company asking for information on a product.

Accuracy and readability

It is important that information is accurate. Inaccuracy of information can mislead or annoy readers. Common mistakes are incorrect spelling and missing or incorrect punctuation.

Spell-checkers help you to correct spelling and punctuation. You must learn to use spell-checkers to detect words spelt incorrectly and repeated words (for example 'and and').

Sometimes a spell-checker will suggest that a word is incorrect when you know it is correct. This often happens with proper names, for example 'GNVQ' or 'Peter'.

You will need to learn that it is possible to create a special personal dictionary, additional to the main dictionary, which contains any unusual words you may wish to use.

Spell-checkers do not tell you when you use a word wrongly or when you have omitted a capital letter at the start of a sentence. It will not correct 'capitol' for 'capital' or 'there' for 'their' or 'to' for 'too'. To correct this type of error you must learn to use software that can check grammar.

This type of software can help you to make sure:

- sentences end with only one full stop
- there is a capital letter at the beginning of sentences
- your sentences have a subject and a verb that agree
- you avoid common errors such as writing 'you and I' when it should be 'you and me'
- for direct effect you write in the active voice rather than the passive
- the readability of statistics meet the needs of your readers.

ICT facilities for checking the accuracy of your documents do not guarantee that there are no errors. To check that your document makes sense, is correctly laid out and meets your purpose you must also proof-read your documents.

When a document is proof-read it is marked by hand to indicate the changes that are needed. Standard marks, which are published in a British Standard, are used for this type of correction. The marks are used to indicate corrections such as:

- deletion
- start new paragraph
- insertion
- transpose
- change case
- indent.

Styles of presentation

It is important to present information clearly – it may annoy or confuse readers if you present information poorly. Common mistakes are using inconsistent headings or layout and using widely different fonts and point sizes. You must think about what you want to achieve with your document and what will appeal to your readers.

There are several essential features that affect the presentation style of documents. You will need to learn how to use or modify these to attain a presentation style to suit your purpose, including:

- page layout
- graphic images
- textual styles
- special features

- paragraph formats
- position of common items.

You can create an effective page layout by using suitable:

- margins
- headers and footers
- page orientation
- paper size
- pagination
- gutters.

You can create suitable textual styles by careful selection and use of:

- fonts
- heading and title styles
- bold italic and underline
- superscript and subscript
- text orientation
- text animation (on screen).

You can create a variety of presentation styles by using different paragraph formats including:

- tabs and indents
- paragraph numbering
- widows and orphans
- justification
- spacing before/after
- use of tables
- bullet points
- line spacing
- hyphenation.

You can make use of features to develop special presentation styles, including:

- use of borders
- use of sounds
- a contents page
- use of shading
- background/text colour
- an index
- a bibliography
- text/picture boxes
- an appendix.

You can use a variety of graphics to improve presentation style, including:

- graphs or charts
- lines or borders
- pictures or drawings
- clip art or scanned images.

You will need to understand how to position important items on a document, including:

- references
- signatures
- dates
- logos

- addressee names
- headings.

You will need to know how and when to use any of these techniques in a document. You may need to create many documents before you are able to judge when to use particular techniques.

You will also need to learn:

- how to create templates to standardise styles of presentation
- when to use existing information
- when to create original information
- when to blend existing and original information
- how to maintain a consistent style throughout a document
- how to combine text, sound, graphics and number information harmoniously.

A slide presentation is a good way of experimenting with these techniques. For a slide presentation you put together a sequence of screens of information that follow each other automatically. There needs to be a pleasing mix of page layout, graphics and text. You also need to judge the time each page (screen) remains in view and plan your pages to suit your viewers.

How organisations gather and present information

Organisations range from multinationals to corner shops. In all organisations a group of people work together to make something or provide a service. They all need to manage information. You must learn about:

- the types of information that organisations need to use
- how organisations collect their information
- the need to acknowledge sources of information
- the flow of information to and from outsiders, such as suppliers and clients
- why organisations need to present information both within and outside the organisation
- how organisations present information both within and outside the organisation
- typical uses of illustrations, technical drawings, pictures and artwork
- commonly accepted standards for the layout of formal documents
- essential information that appears on formal documents
- methods of presenting a corporate image
- how templates might be used to enforce corporate standards.

Organisations use many different types of document. You must show your understanding of writing style, presentation style and common standards for layout in documents such as:

- memos
- agendas
- minutes
- publicity flyers
- invoices
- questionnaires
- business letters
- newsletters
- itineraries
- draft documents
- forms to collect information from people
- fax cover sheets
- e-mail

- reports and technical specifications
- purchase orders
- web pages.

Standard ways of working

Many organisations have rules and guidelines to help people work effectively and avoid problems. These are known as ‘standard ways of working’. They are very important for people working with information technology.

Note

The standard ways of working you need to know and use are described below. You must apply these techniques to all of your work. In the other units the requirements are stated more briefly to avoid repetition of detail.

There are many reasons for having standard ways of working in ICT. The most important is that information in ICT systems can be easily lost or misused. For example:

- unauthorised people may gain access to confidential information
- people may copy original work and present it as their own
- data files may be lost, corrupted by a virus or damaged in other ways
- computers may be damaged so that data stored in them cannot be recovered
- information presented professionally may be believed, even though it may be inaccurate.

Standard ways of working help you to overcome these problems. In your work with ICT you must ensure that you:

- manage your work effectively
- keep information secure
- work safely.

Managing your work

The way you manage your ICT work is important. You need to learn to:

- plan your work to produce what is required to given deadlines
- use spaces, tabs and indents correctly to ensure consistent layout and easy editing
- use file names that are sensible and remind you of the contents
- store files where you can easily find them in the directory/folder structure
- keep a log of any ICT problems you meet and how you solve them.

Keeping information secure

Protecting information from loss or misuse is essential in ICT. You must learn the particular importance of:

- keeping information secure (for example, protection from theft, loss, viruses, fire)
- protecting confidentiality (for example, preventing illegal access to medical or criminal records). People or companies may wish to keep information confidential so that others do not know about it. You must learn to keep this type of information secure and not pass it on to others
- respecting copyright. A computer program, words, pictures and graphic images may belong to other people. The people who created or own this material have copyright and you must not use their work without their permission. If you do you are breaking the law. You must understand and respect copyright law. Where you do use information created by others it is important that you acknowledge the source by using an appropriate reference or listing it in a bibliography.

If work stored on an ICT system is lost, it is important that there is another file that can be used in its place. There are two ways to make this possible:

- by keeping dated backup copies of files on another disk and in another location
- by saving work regularly, and using different filenames.

Working safely

The ICT working environment is relatively safe. However, you must avoid:

- bad posture and physical stress
- eye strain
- hazards resulting from equipment or workplace layout.

You should be aware that a comfortable working position is important to avoid physical stress, eye strain or safety hazards. This may include:

- comfortable seating
- suitable desk and VDU position
- suitable keyboard position
- brief rest periods
- avoiding long periods of continuous VDU work
- a surrounding area that includes near and distant objects the eyes may focus on
- careful layout of cables and equipment (to avoid tripping)
- suitable and complete insulation of cables (from electrical supplies).

ASSESSMENT EVIDENCE

You need to produce:

- six original documents created by you for different purposes to show a range of writing and presentational styles. The documents may be in printed form or shown on-screen. They must include one designed to gather information from individuals and one major document of at least three A4 pages
- a report describing, comparing and evaluating two different standard documents used by each of three different organisations (total of six documents).

To achieve a grade E your work must show:	To achieve a grade C your work must show:	To achieve a grade A your work must show:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • new information that is clear, easy to understand, uses a suitable style and is at a level that suits the intended readers • text styles, page layout, paragraph formatting and, where appropriate, common standards for layout that suit the purpose of each document • combinations of text, graphics, tables, borders and shading used effectively • location, use and adaptation of existing information to suit a presentation, and a list of your information sources in an appropriate form • a clear and accurate description of each of the six collected documents, which identifies the common elements of similar documents • careful checking of the accuracy of the layout and content of your six original documents and your report, and that you have proof-read them to ensure that few obvious errors remain. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • by presenting original draft copies with proof-reading corrections and annotations, how you achieved a coherent and consistent style, made good use of standard formats, placed information in appropriate positions and ensured correct and meaningful content • detailed descriptions of the content, layout and purpose of the six collected documents, accurately evaluating good and bad points about the writing and presentation styles of similar items, commenting on their suitability for purpose and suggesting how they could be improved • that you can work independently to produce your work to agreed deadlines. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a good understanding of writing style, presentation techniques, standards for special documents and attention to detail by organising a variety of types of information into a single coherent, imaginative, easy-to-read presentation of several pages • effective skills in the appropriate use of software facilities to automate aspects of your document production, such as bullets and numbering, paragraph and heading styles, standardised layout, contents lists and indexes • appropriate use of lines, borders, shading, tables, graphics and writing style to create a form that is easy to understand and easy to use to enter data and retrieve the information collected • effective skills in the use of graphics to improve a presentation by making appropriate use of pictures, drawings, clip art, lines and borders, graphs or charts.

ESSENTIAL INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS

Teaching strategies

The original documents, in particular the major document, may be produced while students are working for other units, for example Unit 2: ICT serving organisations (Advanced) and Unit 5: Systems analysis (Advanced). The major document may be on any topic, preferably one of interest to students. It must have enough scope to show their skills. Students will need to practise their skills and produce many documents before they are ready to submit their best quality work for their portfolios.

The importance this unit attaches to accuracy and suitability should ensure that students spend time thinking about the quality of what they wish to communicate and then presenting it simply and clearly. The content of documents is the key to their importance. This unit focuses on the quality of that content, but students also learn from experience and guidance how to improve their presentations by using techniques such as white space.

Acquaintance with documents from different organisations enables students to examine the quality of communication for a wide range of documents. There are numerous real examples of business documents that are stilted, tortuous or simply ineffective. It may be useful to build a bank of business clichés extracted from business documents for students to translate into plain English. Typical documents are:

- bills
- letters advertising financial products, such as credit cards and investments
- mail order forms and letters
- instructions for operating domestic equipment
- conditions of contracts, such as for credit cards, digital TV or hire purchase agreements
- insurance documents, letters and conditions
- advertisements in newspapers and magazines.

While students need to spend a lot of time practising techniques, they should also look for tools that can improve their writing. They should configure grammar checkers to use a variety of writing styles and then use them to check a written document to see if each gives a different response.

Tasks should not become checklists for techniques. The key to success is for students to use a variety of suitable techniques and use them sensibly. A wide choice of documents should ensure variety, but there is no need to drag in every technique listed in what you have to learn.

Group work brings enormous benefits to students. They could work in a group to collect documents, with each student contributing half a dozen cuttings or pamphlets and a critique of what they have collected. A discussion should help to generate ideas about what constitutes good and bad style. There should be no problem about authenticity if each student writes individual comments on a sample of the group's collection. When linked to presentational techniques, these activities should help students to write and present their work clearly, succinctly and effectively.

Assessment strategies

The result of your assessment of student evidence is an overall uniform mark for the unit. This is then used to generate a unit grade. It also contributes to the total uniform mark for the qualification which in turn is used to generate a qualification grade.

The mark you award must take into account the extent to which the evidence matches the requirements of the banner, the set of criteria in the grade E column of the grid, and the grading standards, represented progressively by the criteria in the grade C and grade A columns. Thus the overall mark you determine for a particular student is based on best-fit judgements of the evidence against successive sets of criteria presented as cumulative grade descriptions for grades E, C and A.

When grading student evidence you should consider the following general qualities that distinguish between the three grades:

- increasing depth and breadth of understanding
- increasing coherence, evaluation and analysis
- increasing independence and originality
- increasing objectivity and critical understanding.

Grade E

To achieve an E grade, students should aim to provide evidence that covers all the requirements stated in the E grade criteria of the assessment grid. It may be however that a student demonstrates considerable effort and skill in some areas at the expense of coverage of another. Professional judgement should be used to decide the extent to which the relative strength shown in most of the criteria compensate for any weaknesses.

Students must produce documents that are suitable for their purpose and use different writing styles and layouts that work effectively to serve that purpose. Some documents must contain a variety of information types, including graphics and tables. These elements should be combined in an ordered manner. Elementary typographical skills should be demonstrated in the choice and use of fonts and the formatting of text. Students should make effective use of spell-checkers and other aids, together with careful proof-reading, to achieve reasonably accurate content.

Information originated by the student must be clear and easy to understand and written in an appropriate style. It must also be written at an appropriate level to suit the intended readers.

Students must show they have carefully checked the accuracy of the document content and its layout and kept backup copies of files. Proof-reading must be more than just correcting spelling errors, students should find and correct repeated or totally incorrectly used words. Complete freedom from errors is not essential, but most obvious errors should be removed.

Grade C

To achieve a C grade, students' documents must be of good quality with layout and content well matched to purpose. Students must use clear, consistent and appropriate style throughout each document and should make good use of standard formats to achieve an effective presentation. Students should be able to make good use of document creation software. Draft copies of the long document will show how a standardised format and an appropriate and consistent style were achieved. The notes describing the content, layout and purpose of the six collected documents should show more than a superficial understanding of the design layout used. They should clearly identify the important features of the different documents and highlight differences, giving possible reasons for variations. Students should be able to accomplish ordinary tasks without support and help. They should be able to find and use options for formatting, creating tables and importing graphics. They should carefully plan their work and work independently to meet a given deadline, once they have acquired the necessary knowledge and understanding. This requirement does not mean without teacher intervention or assistance, rather it means that students do not display undue dependence. The agreed deadline may be re-negotiated between the student and teacher to take into account unforeseen circumstances.

Grade A

To achieve a grade A students should produce at least one well-written and well-presented document of several pages. This should show they have paid particular attention to detail, such as layout and removal of errors. It will also show a good understanding of writing style. Their other documents will be accurate, well written and fairly comprehensive. The choice of fonts for body text and headings, etc will be well matched to the purposes of the documents and elements will be carefully and consistently positioned. Documents should give an overall impression of having been designed for a purpose. Students' evaluation of documents acquired from different organisations will be clear, accurate and detailed and be coherent and easy to read. Students will compare the different documents, discussing suitability for purpose, presentation style and layout. They will use appropriate and fluent technical language. The students' evaluation will be quite comprehensive and will contain appropriate and fluent technical language. They will identify good qualities in the documents as well as poor features that need to be improved together with suggestions for such improvement.

Key skills

This guidance highlights the most relevant key skills opportunities in this unit. It contains suggestions only. You will need to check that students have produced all the evidence required to meet part A **and** part B of the key skills specifications. Students may need to develop additional evidence elsewhere to meet fully the requirements of the key skills specifications.

Guidance is referenced in two ways:

K – keys to attainment

These are key skills or aspects of key skills which students should achieve as they meet the vocational requirements of the units. Only part B of the key skill is highlighted – you will need to check that students achieve part A.

S – signposting

These are opportunities that can be incorporated naturally into the learning programme.

COMMUNICATION, LEVEL 3		Key skills reference
When students are:	They should be able to develop the following key skills evidence:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> creating a screen presentation, structuring the information and ideas and using techniques such as transitions 	<p>C3.1b Make a presentation about a complex subject, using at least one image to illustrate complex points.</p>	S
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> collecting information from different sources and extracting key information to include in documents 	<p>C3.2 Read and synthesise information from two extended documents about a complex subject. One of these documents should include a least one image.</p>	S
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> producing six original documents in different forms, choosing and using different writing styles, language and layout to suit different purposes and checking accuracy of writing 	<p>C3.3 Write two different types of documents about complex subjects. One piece of writing should be an extended document and include at least one image.</p>	K

WORKING WITH OTHERS, LEVEL 3		Key skills reference
When students are:	They should be able to develop the following key skills evidence:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> producing six original documents 	Provide at least one substantial example of meeting the standard for WO3.1, WO3.2 and WO3.3 (you must show you can work in both one-to-one and group situations).	
	WO3.1 Plan complex work with others, agreeing objectives, responsibilities and working arrangements.	S
	WO3.2 Seek to establish and maintain cooperative working relationships over an extended period of time, agreeing changes to achieve agreed objectives.	S
	WO3.3 Review work with others and agree ways of improving collaborative work in the future.	S

