



ICAEW's Level 7 Apprenticeship Project Report – August 2019

SUMMARY

We have now completed our first assessment session for this exam. The first cohort comprised 85 submissions. The number of candidates at each session is anticipated to be significantly higher from 2020 onwards.

Candidates appear to be well prepared and are generally addressing the requirements of the exam very well. Consequently, candidates scored high marks with the average mark being 80%. The highest and lowest marks were 96% and 61% respectively. However, candidates should not take passing this exam as a formality just because candidates have so far achieved strong marks. Passing requires thorough preparation and close attention to the exam requirements. It is worth noting, of course, that the exam requirements will vary at each session.

It is hoped that candidates will find this exam good practice for the evaluation of their work that will be expected throughout their career.

General Observations

Candidates answered the requirements very well. Pass rates and average marks reflect this. It is assumed that candidates are benefiting from professional tutoring on how best to complete the exam.

Candidates were almost universally good at writing their answers in a way that made it clear what their personal involvement was in each situation, which is a necessary requirement to pass. It is, however, worth re-emphasising the importance of this. If a candidate is not crystal clear what they did in each situation, they will not score very high marks.

Candidates that do well tend to use short sentences written in plain English.

There was generally a good standard of English and grammar used. Candidates are, however, advised to have their submissions proof read by a colleague or friend before they are submitted to the ICAEW for assessment.

The examiners are not expecting 'exotic' or complex situations but instead everyday situations.

In addition, candidates are strongly advised to:

- Use different situations for each of their answers, so as to provide examiners with strong evidence of their experience of each of the skills and behaviours being assessed.
- Use the most appropriate examples that they can from their experience. These should be examples drawn from their work experience and should not be trivial in nature.
- Make sure they answer the right question (noting that questions will vary at each session).
- Be clear which of the ethics or professional scepticism questions they are answering, given that candidates should select just one of these to answer.
- Write about a specific situation as opposed to a general or theoretical one.
- Use sub-headings to structure their answers. This also aids the marker's assessment.

- Get someone to review their answers before submitting them for assessment.
- Make sure they talk about what they did, throughout their answers.
- Avoid using too much jargon or textbook material.
- Not feel that they need to try and demonstrate their technical prowess, this not being a technical exam.
- Spell check their submissions.
- Make sure they don't simply 'cut and paste' text from their training records. It is very likely that they will need to tailor the information to the specific requirements of each question.
- Put the right information under each sub-heading of their answers.
- Make sure they anonymise their answers i.e. do not refer to client's or individual's names.
- Read the 'top tips' at [icaew.com/level7](https://www.icaew.com/level7) and apply them!

How submissions are marked

There is quite a lot of supporting information available to candidates at [icaew.com/level7](https://www.icaew.com/level7) which candidates are encouraged to read. There is a webinar from the lead examiner, which suggests that candidates structure their answers around the components of each question using sub-headings. This approach should make it easier to cover each of the requirements and also makes it easier for the markers to assess candidates' answers.

Candidates may find it helpful to understand how the exam is marked. Markers will assess each candidate's submission against five sub-requirements, namely:

1. How well candidates have described what they did in the situation (referred to as **personal involvement**);
2. How well candidates have described a specific situation (referred to as the **situation**);
3. How well candidates have described what they did to evidence competence in the specific skill or behaviour (referred to as the **competence**);
4. How well candidates have described how they evaluated the outcome of their work in the specific situation (referred to as the **evaluation**);
5. How well candidates have described what lessons they have learnt (referred to as **lessons learnt**).

Candidates are strongly encouraged to structure their answers so as to address each of these 'sub-requirements', especially as this is how the marking process works. A good way to do this is by the use of sub-headings. The first sub-requirement, however, pervades everything that a candidate writes so it is not recommended that a separate section of an answer is submitted for this.

Based on how well each of these sub-requirements are scored, a final mark is derived. However, candidates should be aware that the first two 'sub-requirements' are of such importance that poor scores on these will limit their ability to score well overall, irrespective of how good the rest of their answer is.

Specific observations about the separate parts of each question

Situation

The descriptions of the situations were often a little too brief. Whilst examiners do not want long descriptions, an extra sentence would often have been helpful to properly understand the scenarios.

This sub-requirement refers to "action". This should be interpreted as "what did you do which demonstrated the skill/behaviour?".

Skill or Behaviour

Answers could, sometimes, have been better tailored to the specific skill or behaviour that is being examined. It is important that answers are specific to a situation as opposed to being written in a general way. Candidates should describe a specific situation that they experienced, as opposed to a generic approach that tends to be applied at work.

Evaluation

Candidates are reminded that as well as discussing what could have gone better, it is also appropriate to note what went well. Noting what went well, and could therefore be repeated in a similar situation, could very well be a valid thing for a candidate to write about.

Furthermore, the evaluation should not just describe what happened, but should be a description of the candidate 'stepping back' to consider what went well and what could have gone better.

Lessons Learnt

Some of the lessons learnt were too general. It would often have been better if they had been written in a way that was more specific and more related to the situation. A good way to identify useful learnings from a situation could be for candidates to ask for feedback from a colleague.

Even if things went mainly well, candidates should be able to identify something to apply in a similar situation in the future. For example, "things went so well that I shared my experience with colleagues by way of a report and a seminar".