

# *ICAEW's Level 4 Apprenticeship, Portfolio & Reflective Statement Examiners' Report – December 2019*



## **SUMMARY**

Nearly 300 candidates have now submitted a Portfolio & Reflective Statement since the exam was launched in 2017. The vast majority of these candidates have passed the exam comfortably. We have, therefore, concluded that the requirements of the exam are readily understood. This means that future candidates should be confident that if they apply themselves properly, they will pass the exam comfortably.

Candidates continue to appear to be well prepared and are addressing the requirements of the exam very well. Candidates again scored high marks with the average mark being 81%. The highest and lowest marks were 98% and 61% respectively. However, future candidates are reminded that passing requires thorough preparation and close attention to the exam requirements.

### **General Observations**

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

Candidates are almost universally good at writing their answers in a way that makes 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. Similarly, candidates who do not describe an appropriate situation for each answer will significantly limit the overall marks that they can receive.

Candidates should be aware that in marking their submissions there is no cross marking between the various parts of the template. This means, for example, that if they describe what they learnt in the wrong part of the template they will not gain any marks for such content.

Whilst there was again an almost universally good standard of English and grammar in the applications, candidates continue to be advised to have their submissions independently proof read before they are submitted to the ICAEW.

In addition, candidates continue to be strongly advised to:

- Make full use of the guidance that can be found at [icaew.com/level4](http://icaew.com/level4);
- Make sure that they restrict their evidence to the appropriate part of the template – for example only describe lessons learnt in the lessons learnt part of the template;
- Use the most recent exam template. At this session, one or two candidates used an old version of the template. This reduced their marks considerably;
- Anonymise their submissions so as to respect client or colleague confidentiality; and
- Make sure that they include references to their training log, as required.

### **Observations on Part 1 (Portfolio)**

To date, candidates have done particularly well on this part of the exam, and to have attained slightly better marks than for part 2. However, at this session parts 1 & 2 scored similar marks.

Most candidates were able to write their answers to this part of the exam concisely. It was often the case that one or two well written sentences were sufficient to pass each part of the 17 requirements.

## **Observations on Part 2 (Reflective Statement)**

Candidates perform well on this section but have a slight tendency to drift away from what is sought in each part of the template or include information in the wrong part of the template, which lowers their marks. Candidates are advised to use different situations for each of their answers, so as to provide examiners with strong evidence of their experience. They are also strongly advised to use just one situation for each answer. Candidates who use more than one situation to answer a particular question are likely to provide insufficient depth of evidence to score good marks.

Candidates are reminded to use the best examples that they can from their experience and make sure they are of a suitable level and are not trivial in nature.

### **Situation**

The descriptions of the situations are often a little too brief. As mentioned earlier, candidates are strongly advised to use a single situation for each answer. Whilst examiners do not require long descriptions, it is often the case that an extra sentence would be helpful to properly understand the scenarios.

### **Skill or Behaviour**

Answers could, sometimes, be better tailored to the specific skill or behaviour that is being examined. Candidates should describe a specific situation that they experienced, as opposed to a generic approach that tends to be applied at work. For example, discussing the firm's general approach to ethics will not score as highly as describing the application of an ethical approach to a specific situation.

### **What learnt / would do differently**

Some of the lessons learnt are too general. It would be better if they were written in a way that is 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.

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 or enhanced in a similar situation, could be a valid thing for a candidate to write about.