
UNIT 1: PRESENTING INFORMATION (7320)



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. It is assessed through your portfolio work. The grade on that assessment will be your grade for the unit.



What You Need To Learn

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 chose. 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 like 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 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
- insertion
- change case
- start new paragraph
- transpose
- 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
- textual styles
- paragraph formats
- graphic images
- special features
- position of common items

You can create an effective page layout by using suitable:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

- references
- dates
- addressee names
- signatures
- logos
- 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. In a slide presentation 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 art work
- 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 ICT GNVQ 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 persons 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		
<p>You must produce:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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). 		
<p>To achieve a grade E you must show you can:</p> <p>E1 create new information that is clear, easy to understand, uses a suitable style and is at a level that suits the intended readers</p> <p>E2 use text styles, page layout, paragraph formatting and, where appropriate, common standards for layout that suit the purpose of each document</p> <p>E3 use and combine text, graphics, tables, borders and shading effectively</p> <p>E4 locate, use and adapt existing information to suit a presentation and list your information sources in an appropriate form</p> <p>E5 describe each of the six collected documents clearly and accurately, identifying the common elements of similar documents</p> <p>E6 show that you have carefully checked the accuracy of the layout and content of your six original documents and your report, and proof-read them to ensure that few obvious errors remain.</p>	<p>To achieve a grade C you must also show you can:</p> <p>C1 show, 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</p> <p>C2 describe in detail 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</p> <p>C3 work independently to produce your work to agreed deadlines.</p>	<p>To achieve a grade A you must also show you can:</p> <p>A1 show a good understanding of writing style, presentation techniques, standards for special documents and attention to detail by organising a variety of different types of information into a single coherent, imaginative, easy to read presentation of several pages</p> <p>A2 show 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</p> <p>A3 make 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</p> <p>A4 show 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.</p>



Teaching Strategies

The original documents, in particular the major document, may be produced while candidates are working for other units. The major document may be on any topic, preferably one of interest to candidates. It must have enough scope to show their skills. Candidates will need to practise their skills and produce many documents before they are ready to produce their best quality work for their portfolios.

The importance this unit attaches to accuracy and suitability should ensure that candidates spend much 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 candidates also learn from experience and guidance how to improve their presentations by using techniques like white space.

Acquaintance with documents from different organisations enables candidates to examine the quality of communication for a wide range of different types of document. 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 candidates 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 HP agreements
- insurance documents, letters and conditions
- advertisements in newspapers and magazines.

While candidates need to spend a lot of time practising techniques, they should also discover tools that can improve their writing. They should configure grammar checkers to use different 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 candidates 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 candidates. They could work in a group to collect documents, with each candidate 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 candidate writes individual comments on a sample of the group's collection. When linked to presentational techniques, these activities should help candidates to write and present their work clearly, succinctly and effectively.

Assessment Strategies

The result of your assessment of candidate evidence is an overall mark for the unit. This is then used to generate a unit grade. It also contributes to the total 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 both the unit pass standards, represented by 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 candidate 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 making these judgements you should consider the following general qualities that distinguish between the grades:

- increasing depth and breadth of understanding
- increasing evaluation, analysis and synthesis
- increasing independence and initiative.

Grade E

To achieve an E grade, candidates 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 candidate demonstrates considerable effort and skill in some areas at the expense of precise detail in another. Professional judgement should be used to decide what is a reasonable expectation of candidates and whether the stated quality and sufficiency requirements have, on balance, been met.

Candidates 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.

Candidates should make effective use of spell-checkers and other aids, together with careful proof reading, to achieve reasonably accurate content.

Information originated by the candidate 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.

Candidates 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, candidates 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 candidates' documents must be of good quality with layout and content well matched to purpose. Candidates must use clear, consistent and appropriate style throughout each document and should make good use of standard formats to achieve an effective presentation.

Candidates 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.

Candidates 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 candidates do not display undue dependence. The agreed deadline may be re-negotiated between the candidate and teacher to take into account unforeseen circumstances.

Grade A

To achieve an A grade candidates 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.

Candidates' evaluation of documents acquired from different organisations will be clear, accurate and detailed and be coherent and easy to read. Candidates will compare the different documents, discussing suitability for purpose, presentation style and layout. They will use appropriate and fluent technical language.

The candidates' 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 Guidance

This guidance is specific to this unit, but for delivery and planning purposes, it should be read in the context of the whole VCE. Please refer to the whole qualification for further information.

The guidance has been split into two sections: keys to attainment and signposts. The two sections should be used in conjunction with each other.

The section on keys to attainment indicates the aspects of the key skills that candidates should develop as they meet the vocational requirements of this unit. It is highly unlikely that candidates will be able to cover the unit requirements appropriately without addressing these key skills.

The section on signposts indicates opportunities to achieve aspects of key skills that can be incorporated naturally into candidates' learning programmes. Candidates should be encouraged to both develop and to produce evidence for these aspects of the key skills, but they may need to develop additional evidence elsewhere to ensure that the requirements of the key skills units are fully met.

Keys to Attainment

<i>When candidates are:</i>	<i>They should have achieved the following key skills evidence:</i>
<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	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.

Signposts

<i>If candidates are:</i>	<i>There may be opportunities for them to develop the following key skills evidence:</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • creating a screen presentation, structuring the information and ideas and using techniques such as transitions 	C3.1b Make a presentation about a complex subject, using at least one image to illustrate complex points.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • collecting information from different sources and extracting key information to include in documents 	C3.2 Read and synthesise information from two extended documents about a complex subject. One of these documents should include a least one image.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working in groups to produce six original documents, as suggested in the teacher guidance through contributing material or examples of documents to the group. • Discussing in groups about what constitutes good and bad style 	WO3.1 Plan complex work with others, agreeing objectives, responsibilities and working arrangements. WO3.2 Seek to establish and maintain cooperative working relationships over an extended period of time agreeing changes to achieve given objectives. WO3.3 Review work with others and agree ways of improving collaborative work in the future.