

# Principal Examiners' Report November 2010

FS

## Functional Skills English Writing Level 2

### E203

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# E103 - Functional Skills English, Writing Level 1

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## General comments

This paper worked well in testing Level 2 Writing Skills. The two tasks set were writing a letter to a council about their entertainment programme and writing a review of a holiday. These subjects proved accessible to learners and the large majority produced some appropriate ideas for each task. However, there was a large variation in how clearly these ideas were expressed and the full range of marks was awarded.

### Task 1

Most learners were able to offer a review of the current programme and to suggest ideas for new/improved events as required. The more successful candidates developed their ideas, e.g. by explaining how the community would benefit from the new/improved events. Most learners also managed to write in an appropriately formal tone, with a few lapses.

Letter format was an issue for the large majority of learners, with very few managing a completely correct layout and an appropriate open and close. Weaker learners did not always spot that the recipient address was in the letter and made one up instead. The more successful learners wrote to a clear structure, with many using the bullet points provided to underpin their response. Less successful learners tended to have limited control of structure and their paragraphing was erratic, with a number of candidates writing in one sentence paragraphs and others writing the text in one continuous block. Spelling and grammar were variable in quality. Some responses were highly accurate, whereas others contained too many errors for meaning to be supported. There were also issues with non capitalisation of proper nouns and incorrect sentencing in a large number of responses.

Only a small number of learners showed evidence of having planned their responses, before they started writing them. It was clear that writing a plan had helped these learners to write clearly and logically.

### Task 2

Most learners were able to attempt an appropriate tone for a review and there were a number of entertaining and well written responses. A large number of learners did not spot that the review was for visituk.com and so wrote about holidays abroad. This prevented some otherwise able learners from getting into the top band for form, communication and purpose. It is crucial that learners read the stimulus text carefully to ensure that their response is fit for purpose.

Again, many of the stronger learners used the bullet points in the task to add a logical structure to their response. By contrast other learners did not spot that they were writing for a specific audience and so wrote a personal account of a holiday, without offering advice to the reader. This meant that they did not present information persuasively as was required.

There are no format conventions for a review and so this was not an issue. However, a number of responses did contain significant weaknesses in spelling, punctuation and grammar, as in Task 1.

### **Recommendations for Centres**

This is a Functional Skills test, so learners will only be rewarded for writing responses that are fit for purpose, i.e. relevant to the task in hand. This means that they must read the question and stimulus material with great care, before they start to write their response. Responses that are well written but of limited relevance to the task set will not receive a high mark for form, communication and purpose.

Prior to the test all learners should be given opportunities to practice writing in various formats, for different audiences and purposes. This experience will be of great help to them in tackling a future L2 Writing paper.

It is also vital that learners are able to correctly format a formal letter, prior to taking this exam.

Centres should also reinforce the fact that 40% of the marks are for spelling, punctuation and grammar. It is important to remind learners that they are allowed to use a dictionary and also that they should spend a few minutes checking through their work, after they have finished.

Finally it is also recommended that centres tell learners that they can plan their work on the exam paper. They will just need to rule through this if they don't want it to be marked.

## Pass mark for E103

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Maximum mark	25
Pass mark	16
UMS mark	6

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