

Principal Examiners' Report February 2011

FS

Functional Skills English Writing Level 1

E103

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E103 - Functional Skills English, Writing Level 1

General Comments

This question paper worked well in testing Level 1 Writing Skills. The tasks set were writing a letter of application in response to a job advert at a Water Park and writing an email to an airline company requesting a refund for an additional cost to a flight. Both tasks were accessible and realistic and many learners were able to produce functional responses that demonstrated an awareness of the requirements of each task.

Task 1

The majority of learners were able to engage with the task and many generated a well constructed letter of application using a sustained formal tone. A number of responses included appropriate references to the job advert and to their preferred type of work and most were able to include some details of their skills, qualifications and experience.

The more successful learners linked their relevant work experience, skills or qualities to specific opportunities. These learners were able to utilise the information in the task and use it effectively to help sequence and detail their ideas. Less successful learners limited their response by focussing on fewer points or merely listing them, which prevented evidence of development. Some responses were generic rather than specific and failed to address the requirements of the advert. Organisation of ideas for a number of learners was not always fully sustained but information was often relevant and purposeful. A few included very imaginative qualifications which often resulted in a less cohesive response and some failed to recognise that the advert had been placed in a local newspaper and not a shop window.

Whilst a significant number attempted a formal letter layout, this proved problematic, with only a few able to demonstrate the conventions correctly. Often there was confusion in the placing of the sender's and recipient's address and the latter was frequently omitted. Very few letters included a date. There were many responses that included the correct opening salutation but often this was not matched with the correct close.

There were very few responses where clarity was affected by poor spelling, punctuation or grammar and many were reasonably accurate although the word 'writing' was regularly misspelled as 'writting'. There were a significant number of responses that contained incorrect sentencing, missing punctuation and non capitalisation of nouns.

Task 2

Many learners were able to respond to the task in an appropriate manner. The more successful learners used the details from the text to help support their message and suitably expressed their concern about the additional flight cost. A large number failed to use the bullet points in the prompt to help them structure their response. This omission often led to a lack of important detail although a significant number were able to include sufficient information to ensure the message was clear and functional. Weaker learners had difficulty in assimilating the detail and organising their response and occasionally the message became confused. A few were unable to introduce or sustain an appropriate tone and the effectiveness of the response was lost by the use of ridiculous threats and outrageous demands.

Although an email requires a less formal layout to that of a letter, a significant number failed to recognise this and used formal letter conventions to open and close the message. There were also some learners that used an alternative recipient name to that shown in the email header.

Again, the clarity of many of the responses was not affected by poor spelling although the word 'paid' was often misspelled. There were omissions in punctuation and use of appropriate capitalisation and, on occasions, sentence construction was at a basic level. The more able connected their ideas using linking phrases.

Principal Examiner tips

It is important that learners prepare for the test by practising the various types of written layouts, i.e. formal letters, emails, informative leaflets, internet forums etc. There is some loss of functionality when formats are incorrectly applied.

A planned response is useful in helping to sequence ideas and maintain a focus. This can often help to create a clear structure and a concise response and avoid irrelevant or lengthy detail.

Proof reading work should be encouraged. This could help to eliminate omissions in punctuation and allows the opportunity to identify spelling or grammatical errors. Learners should be reminded that they are allowed to use dictionaries.

Pass mark for E103

Maximum mark	25
Pass mark	18
UMS mark	6

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