

Principal Examiners' Report February 2011

FS

Functional Skills English Reading Level 2

E202

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E202 - Functional Skills English, Reading Level 2

General comments

This question paper provided a successful test of Level 2 reading skills. The topic of downloading music was accessible to the learners who sat the test and the full range of marks was awarded.

More successful learners were able to identify the purpose of the texts, comment on how meaning was conveyed and also to detect bias. Less successful learners were only able to engage with the texts on a surface level and struggled to comment on purpose, bias and meaning.

A common issue was learners writing answers that were general or speculative in nature, rather than focused on the texts. For example, a number of learners identified bullet points as a feature in Question 8, although these do not appear in Text B.

As in previous series, excessively short answers prevented some learners accessing marks. For example, a number of learners identified the purpose of Text A or Text B as being 'to inform' or 'to persuade', but did not say what they were persuading or informing us about. Careful reading of the questions was required for learners to be successful in this test. This could be seen on Question 4 where a number of learners gave reasons why it was important to pay to download music, rather than identifying things that would encourage people to do this.

Question 1

Many learners were able to identify a valid purpose for this text. There were a wide range of acceptable answers, including 'to inform about the music industry' and to 'persuade people that they should pay to download music.'

Incorrect answers often described content, e.g. 'it's about illegal music downloading,' or lacked a qualifier, e.g. 'to persuade.' Another issue was learners writing about downloading generally, rather than referring specifically to illegal downloading.

Question 2/3

These were well answered by the majority of learners. Where they got these questions wrong there was no obvious pattern to this.

Question 4

Wrong answers tended to make general statements about possible benefits to the music industry, or paraphrased the suggestion that if people paid for ringtones then it should be possible to get them to pay to download music. This did not suggest how people could be encouraged to pay. Short answers were also an issue, with some learners just writing "set fee," or "unlimited downloads," rather than combining these ideas.

Question 5

There were few entirely correct responses to this question, with most learners securing one or two marks. Statements four and five caused the most confusion, with many learners identifying these as being opinion, perhaps based on their own experience. These learners had missed the point that they were being asked to identify which statements were **presented** as facts or opinions, rather than simply identifying facts and opinions. Centres need to give learners plenty of practice in this area.

Question 6

This was a challenging question for many learners. It was clear that some learners were not entirely clear on what bias means and a number did not attempt the question. The most common point of bias identified was the fact that the text is biased against young people, with relatively few learners commenting on use of language.

Successful learners picked up on the fact that the question asks for examples and quoted or made reference to appropriate parts of the text in their responses. Less successful learners often wrote short answers that made no reference to the text, e.g. 'it's one sided,' or 'uses persuasive language.' To get marks learners must link statements such as these with examples from the text.

Speculative answers were also commonly seen, with many learners suggesting that the survey might have been biased, as we are not told the sample size. These responses did not receive a mark, as they are conjecture and not based on the text.

When preparing learners for this test centres should give learners the opportunity to practice identifying bias in a range of texts. Learners should also be told to avoid speculation and to ensure that they make reference to/quote the text to support the points they are making.

Question 7

There were similar issues to Question 1. Again, there were a wide range of acceptable answers, with the key points being the use of a verb or qualifier and reference being made to the fact that the text was informing you about/persuading you to download music.

A number of learners did not get the mark, as they assumed the text was an advert, presumably due to its persuasive tone. Centres need to teach learners to read the texts carefully, instead of making assumptions based only on tone.

Question 8

There were a lot of successful responses to this question. Many learners successfully identified the question/answer format and the use of links.

As with Question 6, less successful learners found this question challenging and did not appear to understand what text features are. These learners often just quoted three statements from the text, without identifying any features. Another common weakness was learners making general statements, e.g. about the "simple layout," but not giving a feature. Lack of detail was also an issue in many responses, with learners often giving answers such as 'bold' or 'paragraphs.' These did not get a mark, whereas 'key words highlighted in bold' or 'short paragraphs' would have done.

Centres should teach learners to clearly identify 'features of a text which help to convey information', as opposed to giving examples of the information that was conveyed.

Question 9

This was generally well answered. Where learners got this question wrong it was generally because they referred to ideas not mentioned in the text, e.g. about making artists money. Centres need to remind learners that their answers must be based on what is in the text.

Question 10

This was also generally well answered. The most common mistake seen was learners referring to the cost of an album or single, rather than stating what was needed to pay for them, i.e. a credit card, or special payment card.

Question 11

There were a large number of acceptable responses to this question and many learners got two or three marks. Learners using their own knowledge rather than the text was sometimes an issue, with some referring to the fact that you could easily put downloaded music onto an MP3 player.

Other learners quoted benefits from the passage, but did not pick up on the fact that these needed to be benefits of downloading music. For example, a number of learners put down 'can speak to artists in chat rooms' which is a benefit of using the internet, rather than of downloading music.

Question 12/13

These were generally well answered, although a number of incorrect answers were seen, showing that some learners had not read the information with sufficient care.

Question 14

Many learners achieved at least two marks for this question. 'Refreshments available' was not accepted, as these were available every day and this was the most common wrong answer seen. A number of answers were very brief, e.g. 'cheapest' as a reason for choosing Day 3. For this question, answers like this could gain a mark, but centres are advised to encourage learners to avoid one word answers in future.

Principal Examiner tips

Centres are recommended to focus teaching on encouraging learners to engage with texts at a deeper level to enable them to correctly identify purpose and comment on point of view, bias and how meaning is conveyed. This is an essential skill for this test and practice with a wide range of texts is vital.

Learners should be taught to avoid excessively short answers, which may prevent them accessing marks.

Centres should also reinforce the importance of reading the questions carefully and of ensuring that all answers given are based on information in the text.

Centres should also ensure that all learners know the meaning of the key vocabulary used in the questions, e.g. bias and text features.

Pass mark for E202

Maximum mark	25
Pass mark	18
UMS mark	6

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