

# Principal Examiner Report

November 2011

FS English Writing Level 1

E103

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## **General comments**

This paper worked well in testing Level 1 writing skills. The two tasks set were:

1. writing an article to describe tourist attractions/leisure facilities, shops and transport links in a particular locality
2. writing an email of complaint to the manager of a train company after a train cancellation

Both tasks were successfully interpreted. There were many prompts to draw on which enabled most learners to understand the tasks/contexts.

## **Task 1**

This task proved accessible to those learners who understood what an 'article' was, however, it did present some problems for learners who were not sure of the correct format for an article. Many learners were able to write about their local area with a sense of ownership and pride. This led to a number of very good responses that had a thoughtful focus on the intended audience and used detailed and descriptive vocabulary with accuracy. There was a good range of responses, and considerable differentiation.

The bullet point framework given in the rubric gave structure to many responses. Learners were able to develop their ideas convincingly and attempted to establish a rapport with the reader.

Stronger responses had a heading for the article which generally contained the name of the area they were going to describe. There was also an immediate focus on the audience by writing an introduction which welcomed the visitors and gave them a brief overview of what was going to be discussed. The learners then followed the bullets one by one giving structure to their response. This helped them to link attractions/facilities/services to gender/age groups when offering advice as to what the visitors might find most interesting/useful. They then ended the article with a direct link back to the visitors, wishing them well on their trip and hoping they enjoyed themselves while they were there.

Strong answers used capital letters for names of places and attractions, eg shops and travel firms/companies. They had no comma splicing, used full stops and task marks where appropriate effectively and used the correct spellings of homophones. Sentences did not start with conjunctions and grammar and tenses were also used correctly.

Some learners tended to misinterpret the task and the intended audience. In addition to there being no clear introduction and conclusion, a number of responses did not name the area they were describing. Quite a few could have been anywhere, the content was so vague and some focused only on what there was to do at their school/college. Some wrote letters and quite a few disappointing responses lacked functionality through covering UK attractions rather than their local area. Other responses were quite clearly written but did not have the requisite attention to detail. They failed to be

specific in their naming of places/attractions/facilities. They also became very repetitive and used 'shopping' as the main attraction.

## **Task 2**

The email of complaint was very popular and engaged the learners' interest. Overall, tone and language were more appropriate than in previous series. There was much righteous indignation at the shocking treatment of customers by the train company.

The stronger responses addressed the audience correctly. Although there is no set format to an email, there is a degree of formality which needs to be addressed when writing an email of complaint. Learners also addressed the bullet points in a logical and reasonably detailed way. They covered both the show that they were subsequently late for and re-booking costs in their argument and explained in detail the problems that the cancellation had caused.

Many learners adopted an appropriately formal tone and used an appropriate opening and closing salutation, eg 'Dear Katherine' or 'Dear Ms Albert' and 'Yours sincerely'. They introduced themselves and said that they were writing to complain about the problems they encountered after a train cancellation had occurred. They described in detail the problems they had encountered such as being late for the show and not being able to afford the re-booking fee. Finally, they closed the email by asking for some form of realistic compensation and advising that they would like to hear back from the manager.

Some learners missed out on one or more of the bullet points which undermined the complaint's functionality. Where the responses did follow the bullets, they were very brief and did little more than repeat the main points. They did not build up the scenario and went straight into saying a train had been cancelled and that they wanted their re-booking fee back. Quite a few made up their own details of where they were going, eg meetings, appointments, weddings, when the task clearly gave them the information – a show. Also, on occasions, learners complained rather too strongly, to the extent where tone and language were completely inappropriate.

Common spelling errors included, for example, 'wrighting' instead of 'writing', confusion over 'where' and 'were', use of 'are' instead of 'our' and 'payed' instead of 'paid'.

## **Recommendations for Centres**

This is a Functional Skills test, so learners will only be rewarded for writing responses that are fit for purpose. In preparation for this test learners need to understand the purpose of different types of functional task. When they come to the test they must read the task and stimulus text with great care to understand the purpose, 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.

In preparation for this test, learners need to understand the purpose of different types of functional task (eg article, email with a formal tone) and 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 Level 1 Writing paper.

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 do not want it to be marked.

## Pass mark for E103 in November 2011

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Maximum mark	<b>25</b>
Pass mark	<b>16</b>
UMS mark	<b>6</b>

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