

Examiner's Report/ Principal Examiner Feedback

February 2012

Functional Skills English

Writing Level 1

E103

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Publications Code FC030369

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General comments

This paper was very successful in testing the writing skills at Level 1.

On the whole, a full range of marks was awarded, although some learners gained marks in the middle mark bands due to some common errors. The most common errors were:

- writing in the wrong format or the lack of correct letter layout
- lack of proof reading
- weak spelling

Centres should remind learners that dictionaries **can** be used and that the learners should check spellings of words that are provided in the materials.

Task 1

The task asked learners to write a letter to Hana Keplova, Head of Recycling Services, to give views about changes to the waste collection service.

The task allowed the full range ability to respond.

The learners seemed to appreciate environmental concerns and complications caused by the public having to make an extra effort to visit recycling centres. Perhaps, unsurprisingly, the majority were against the proposals, with only a handful writing in support. The fines were often mentioned in the higher marking band responses but were only infrequently alluded to in the middle marking band answers. Although the bullet points are only a suggestion, often they could give learners more ideas to develop their responses.

It was refreshing to see the number of learners who were concerned about the wider effects on the community, such as for the disabled or elderly residents of Estrick.

The majority of responses communicated effectively with the correct layout for a formal letter and a suitable tone; however, quite a high percentage of learners were not awarded marks in the top marking band as the sender's address was not given, thus not allowing Hana Keplova or the department to respond. Often, the formal letter omitted a date or the correct closure, often ending with 'faithfully' rather than 'sincerely'.

A common mistake was the usage of a singular person with plural verb. There was also a plethora of mixed tenses, 'I have went to', 'I was been' and 'I was came' are such examples. Some learners spelt words included in the information provided incorrectly, such as: 'waste' and 'writing'.

Task 2

This task asked learners to write an entry for a website 'days_out_are_.us.co.uk' recommending, informing and advising others of a good day out in the UK.

This task was often attacked with enthusiasm and in a large number of cases this was communicated in the response. Although the learners' knowledge of geography was somewhat lacking, learners were not penalised for this.

Some learners were less successful because they gave an account of a trip or holiday abroad. The task referred to the 'UK' four times. Learners need to be encouraged to read the task very carefully. A few learners simply supplied a narrative rather than seeking to inform in the correct way. Several stories were presented which did not inform or advise the potential readers about one specific venue or location. Thorpe Park, Alton Towers, Blackpool and the London Eye, were the most frequent choices made and it was refreshing when original ideas were presented.

Some learners misinterpreted the purpose of the task and designed advertisements, while others gave very brief details of their 'day out'. Learners could have developed their ideas by considering some of the suggestions in the bullet points, such as why others may enjoy the experience.

Learners should remember the need for correct use of language. Although this task allowed for a more informal approach, texting slang should be discouraged and learners should take care with their use of spelling and punctuation.

Common issues with spelling, punctuation and grammar were a lack of capitals for place names and the inconsistent use of full stops. Words which were frequently incorrectly spelt were 'restaurants', 'hole' instead of 'whole' and the wrong placing of 'your' (for "you're") and 'their' or 'there' (for "they're"). In addition to this, there appears to be the increased use of the lower case 'i' for the first person.

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 formal letter, information leaflet, internet forum) 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 don't want it to be marked.

Pass mark for E103 in February 2012

Maximum mark	25
Pass mark	16
UMS mark	6

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Order Code FC030369 February 2012

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