

Examiner's Report/ Principal Examiner Feedback

February 2012

Functional Skills English

Reading Level 2

E202

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General comments

This paper worked well in testing Level 2 Reading Skills. The subject matter of the texts seemed accessible to learners and the large majority produced some good quality responses.

Question 1

Learners were asked to give the main purpose of Text A.

Some learners were able to answer this question fully, giving an accurate reason why the text was written (eg 'to tell the reader', 'to inform you') and appropriate comments about what the text was about.

Many learners did not gain the mark due to the brevity of their response and this meant that their answer (often only one word) only gave a reason with no reference to the content of the text. Similarly, some learners omitted the reason entirely and focussed only on the content of the text, eg 'it's about global warming'. Furthermore, a significant number of learners failed to fully grasp the purpose in terms of the fact that the text was about the *causes* of global warming, rather than global warming generally or indeed the *effects* of global warming.

Question 2

Most answers were accurate for this question and learners were able to pinpoint the information needed to give the correct response.

Question 3

Learners did well with this question on the whole with many correct answers.

Question 4

Responses to this question were predominantly accurate with learners able to give at least one correct answer and some learners giving answers from all possible variations.

Some learners also gave more than two correct responses. Learners should be encouraged to give only the number of responses required by the stem of the question.

A common error was that learners duplicated the same response in both answer spaces, which meant that only one mark was awarded. This was usually 'forest clearance', 'deforestation' and 'trees die'.

Question 5

Most learners were able to locate some of the facts and opinions accurately to gain 2 marks. A high number were totally accurate on this question to score the full 3 marks.

Question 6

The question asks the learner to consider how the writer supports their viewpoint in Text A.

Many learners gave responses that were quotes from the text but that gave no explanation as to how these supported viewpoint.

This was overall a challenging question. Those learners who did gain a mark were able to note that the text used statistics and a small number recognised that the writer used examples of human activities.

Question 7

As with Q1, the learner was asked to give the purpose of Text B.

Similarly to Q1, learners did not recognise that this text was about the *benefits* of cycling and gave far too general responses that simply stated that the text was about cycling.

There were also significant numbers of responses that gave no reason for writing the text (to tell the reader, to persuade you) at all or omitted the inclusion of what the text was about.

Question 8

The majority of learners understood what this question required in terms of locating features of how information is conveyed by the writer. However, many learners failed to gain full marks as their answers were too general, eg 'paragraphs' or 'short sentences' which are not sufficiently specific when addressing a specific text. The response of 'use of bold headings/subheadings' was common and gained a mark. Another commonly mentioned feature was the use of bullet points.

Some learners misunderstood the question in giving main/key points of the text. Learners should be encouraged to use a dictionary to ensure understanding the requirements of the questions.

Question 9

This was generally answered confidently with most learners gaining the mark for 'more cycle lanes'. However, many learners failed to discriminate that the cycle routes were *dedicated* routes for cyclists and therefore did not gain the mark.

A high proportion of learners had focussed on the surrounding sentences giving lengthy responses, which quoted almost all of the relevant section, but did not focus on the relevant key pieces of information.

Question 10

The majority of learners were able to give a relevant response to gain the mark for this question.

Many correct answers were seen.

Question 11

Many learners answered this question well, gaining at least 2 marks in most cases with responses given across all potential options available.

A common error with the question was that learners gave repeated responses and were unable to differentiate between the issues of delays to the cyclist, benefits to the environment, speed/efficiency of travel for the cyclist and health benefits for the cyclist. There was a tendency for learners to give answers about the same benefit in duplicate, eg 'there are no delays' and 'it saves time' or similarly, 'it's good for the environment' and 'it's pollution-free'. This was seen in a high number of responses.

Questions 12 and 13

These were mainly answered correctly.

Question 14

Most learners were able to choose a bike and give at least two appropriate reasons for their choices so gained two marks.

In a few cases, learners used their own knowledge and gave answers that were not rooted in the text, making assumptions about their bike of choice such as 'it will be good for going up hills'.

Some learners gave responses that were not specific to their choice of bike, eg 'it's lightweight' or 'it's adjustable'. Similarly, some learners were vague in their responses saying that their choice was 'cheap' or 'good value' or 'it has suspension'.

Very few learners failed to answer the question, suggesting good exam time management skills.

Recommendations for Centres

In preparation for the assessment, learners should be encouraged to use a wide range of reading strategies and navigational features to locate information that is both explicit and implied. These skills are vital when answering multiple choice questions such as Q2 and Q3 and also those questions that ask for specific detailed reading, ie Q9, Q10, Q11, Q12, Q13.

It is important that learners are clear about what the question is asking of them. By carrying out practice assessments, learners can explore questions to gain an understanding of how questions are posed and the best ways to approach them. During exam preparation, learners should be encouraged to produce thorough responses to gain as many marks as possible, again on questions such as Q1, Q7, Q9 and Q11.

Although the stem of the questions says 'you do not need to write in sentences', learners should be discouraged from writing one-word answers on the majority of questions as this does not give them the opportunity to express their ideas in enough detail.

Learners should be exposed, during preparations, to a wide range of texts so that they can identify purpose and also that they are confident in recognising how text is written to convey information, ie through associated features of language and layout. This is particularly important for questions Q1, Q7, Q8 and, to a certain extent, Q6.

With regards to Q6, learners should have a good understanding of what bias is, and feel confident that they can determine the ways in which texts reveal bias. Learners can practise locating methods of conveying bias and must also be discouraged from repeating large 'chunks' from the text. They should be encouraged instead to develop their responses to include details of how the text tries to influence its reader. Learners should also be aware that the question may not mention 'bias' per se and that other expressions might be used such as 'the writer's viewpoint' or 'how the writer influences the reader'.

Question 5 can be addressed through the explicit teaching and learning of the differences between fact and opinion and, again, by discussing and exploring practice assessments and other examples of appropriate texts.

With regards to Q8, learners should practise how to consider the ways in which language and layout features convey information for Q8. Certain responses such as 'short sentences' and 'paragraphs' should be avoided, as these are too generic. Learners should be looking for specifics in the particular text on the assessment rather than revising a 'set list' of features. Learners must also be supported in developing their responses to show understanding of the feature by writing more than one word answers such as 'image'.

Question 14 allows learners to make choices based on their own experience. It is essential that learners use their own scenario to make appropriate real-life choices to give valid reasons for their choice based on the text. Assumptions about why an item has been chosen rather than using information from the text

can be an area of weakness here. This can be improved through practice, with learners given plenty of opportunity to consider why certain items would be chosen over others. It is also important that learners give responses that are specific to their chosen option.

Pass mark for E202 in February 2012

Maximum mark	25
Pass mark	16
UMS mark	6

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