

# Principal Examiners' Report

January 2016

Functional Skills English

Writing Level 2

E203

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Publications Code FC043201

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## **E203: Level 2 Writing January 2015 Principal Examiner Report**

This paper was successful in giving learners the opportunity to demonstrate Level 2 writing skills. The first task required candidates to write a review of a 'Onestop Wondershop' that had opened in their area. For the second task the candidates needed to write a letter to apply for a fundraising adventure holiday. Both tasks were accessible and there were very few examples of misinterpretation.

The full range of marks was awarded on both tasks, based on how successfully candidates expressed and developed their ideas.

### **Task 1**

All learners were able to present appropriate information and to give some feedback about the shop. It was clear that learners were familiar with the concept of a review and tone was often nicely judged, with learners addressing the audience directly. Conversely some learners did not read the prompt material sufficiently carefully and wrote what was effectively a letter to the shop management, rather than a review for a community newsletter.

The prompt material provided ideas on what the shop offered and successful learners were able to build on this and add their own comments on the different aspects. Learners who did this were able to develop their ideas logically for at least some of the response and give an appropriate level of detail.

Less functional responses often lacked clear structure and organisation. These responses often frequently switched from one idea to another and sometimes became repetitious and unclear. Some responses also became too angry and strident in their criticism of the shop and so failed to demonstrate an appropriate tone.

Learners needed to demonstrate accurate use of sentence structure and paragraphing in order to get their points across clearly. Less successful responses were those where candidates only had limited sentence control and also did not make accurate use of paragraphs, with some written as a continuous block of text and others written in one sentence paragraphs.

The full range of marks was awarded for spelling, punctuation and grammar. Some responses demonstrated an impressive level of accuracy and most used spelling, grammar and punctuation with some accuracy. There were also responses that contained so many errors that meaning became unclear. Common grammatical errors included use of the wrong verb tense or the omission of articles. There were also responses that included several basic punctuation errors such as missing full stops and capital letters.

Common spelling errors included the perennial issues with homophones such as confusion between 'your' and 'you're.' Other common misspellings on this task included 'prombles' and 'alot.'

## **Task 2**

Most learners engaged well with this task and were able to clearly explain why they wanted to support a particular charity and also why they would be suitable for an adventure holiday. Many heartfelt and persuasive pieces of writing were seen.

The stronger responses were those where learners were able to develop their ideas logically and produce a clearly structured piece of writing. These responses were also characterised by apt choices of vocabulary and an appropriate tone.

Weaker responses were those where learners struggled to develop their ideas clearly. On occasion it was hard to work out what learners were applying for and why. These responses often lost control of sentence structure and made limited use of organisational features.

Many candidates used letter format correctly which shows that this important skill is being taught in centres. However, a number of errors were seen, with the most common being omission of the sender address and date and signing off with 'Yours faithfully' when 'Yours sincerely' would have been correct.

The full range of marks was awarded for spelling, punctuation and grammar. There were similar patterns of errors seen as in Task 1, with large numbers of grammatical errors in some responses. 'I am writting' was also seen in many responses.

## **Recommendations for Centres**

Both tasks in this paper are now equally weighted at 15 marks. The time for the paper has also been extended to one hour. It is important that learners plan their time carefully to ensure that they have sufficient time to fully answer both tasks.

In order to demonstrate functionality learners need to present appropriate information and develop relevant ideas clearly. Centres are recommended to reinforce the importance of reading the task and stimulus material very carefully and also to encourage candidates to plan their responses.

Prior to the test all candidates should be given opportunities to practice writing in various formats, for different audiences and purposes. Practice on use of formal and informal tone and effective ways of opening and closing different types of writing would also be of benefit to learners. A strong opening and close are important components of an effective response.

Candidates should be reminded that any bullet points in the task prompt can be used to help them structure their response. If the supporting bullets are prefaced

with 'you may,' candidates can use some or all as they wish, although it is recommended that candidates use any bullets as scaffolding for their writing. Where the bullets are prefaced with 'you should,' candidates must address all the bullets to a greater or lesser extent, depending on how they want to respond.

Spelling, punctuation and grammar contribute 40% of the marks for this paper. It was clear that many candidates were well below Level 2 in these areas, as there were errors in skills such as the use of the capital letter, verb tenses and also in the spelling of common words. Centres are recommended to allocate appropriate teaching time to developing candidates' skills in spelling, punctuation and grammar and to consider entering candidates at lower levels if they are not ready for Level 2.

To aid proof-reading it is important that candidates are familiar with using a dictionary and they also need to be made aware that they should spend a few minutes checking through their work, after they have finished writing. This can have a significant impact on the mark awarded for SPG.

## Pass mark for E203 in January 2016

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Maximum mark	<b>30</b>
Pass mark	<b>18</b>
UMS mark	<b>6</b>

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