

Principal Examiners' Report

July 2017

Functional Skills English
Writing Level 2 (E203)

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E203: Level 2 Writing July 2017 Principal Examiner Report

The paper worked well as a test of Level 2 writing skills. The first task required candidates to write an email to nominate somebody for a 'Local Hero' award. The second task required candidates to write a review of an item they had bought from a technology website. Both tasks were accessible and there were very few examples of misinterpretation seen.

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

Task 1

Candidates responded to this task with enthusiasm and there were a number of persuasive and detailed nominations. There were a wide range of people chosen, including nurses, policemen, firefighters, teachers and relatives who did work in the community.

The best responses were those which went into detail about their hero and why he or she deserved the award. These responses also developed ideas logically and were well structured, usually including some kind of an introduction and then a summing up at the end.

Weaker responses lacked the clear detail and development of ideas needed for functionality. Sometimes it was unclear what the selected person had done and why they were being nominated. These responses often lacked logical sequencing of ideas and sometimes became repetitious and unclear.

Candidates needed to demonstrate accurate use of sentence structure and paragraphing in order to develop their ideas 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.

Task 2

Technology was clearly an accessible topic for candidates and a wide range of products were chosen for review, including TVs, laptops, mobile phones, games consoles and sat-navs. Candidates used their personal experience to build on the prompt material and develop ideas. Some learners wrote balanced reviews, while others chose to be entirely positive or negative. All of these approaches could achieve the top band of the mark scheme, as long as ideas were presented clearly and developed logically.

Stronger candidates were able to use an appropriate tone for a review and to use a clear structure for their writing, often using organisational features such as sub-headings. These candidates also developed their opinion in some detail, giving detailed reasons for their views. Another feature of a successful response was a clear opening stating what the review was about and a summary at the end.

Weaker responses were those where candidates struggled to express or develop their opinions clearly. These responses sometimes became repetitious and contradictory. Weaker responses also generally demonstrated limited control of sentence structure and made haphazard use of organisational features such as paragraphs. A few candidates produced very short responses and so did not demonstrate their writing skills fully.

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. Some candidates made mistakes with words that were in the prompt material, including 'recommend'.

Recommendations for Centres

In order to demonstrate functionality candidates 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 and for different audiences and purposes. For Task 2 on this paper candidates would have benefited from practising writing reviews of different products. 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 candidates. 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. 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 July 2017

Maximum mark	30
Pass mark	18
UMS mark	6

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