

# Principal Examiner's Report

May 2017

Pearson Edexcel Functional Skills  
English Writing Level 1 (E103)

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## **Principal Examiner Report: L1 Writing May 2017 Series**

### **Introduction**

This paper worked well in testing Level 1 Writing Skills. The two tasks set were, writing a contribution to an online discussion about the place where the learner lived and what they liked, or disliked, about it and an email to their local cinema to promote their favourite film with the aim of earning free entry for a year. These subjects proved accessible to the majority of learners and many produced appropriate responses and persuasive views for each task. However, there was a large variation in how clearly these ideas were expressed and in what detail, consequently the full range of marks was awarded.

### **Task 1**

Most learners were able to complete the task using appropriate language and tone for writing a document for a public platform. Most learners understood the main purpose of the task, although a few had not fully understood this and wrote directly to the two contributors named in the stimulus text. In these responses, this affected their functionality and these learners could not achieve the higher mark band for form, communication and purpose. A significant number relied heavily on the ideas expressed in the task text and repeated them, simply referring to them to their own home location, or preferred place to live. They repeated the same feelings expressed by the text contributors and consequently were unable to achieve top band marks.

On the other hand, a number of learners took the opportunity to explore and express how they felt about where they live and what had real meaning and importance to them about those locations. These learners fully engaged with the task and wrote with some emotion when describing the positives and in some cases the negatives, about these places. These more successful learners were able to develop their own detailed descriptions of living in their chosen place including things like the excitement of city life or the peace and calm of living in a rural location. Many tempered their response by describing aspects that could be improved, a particular dislike was the casual attitude to litter and its effect on the appearance of their place. These learners were mostly placed in the highest mark band for form, communication and purpose.

Less successful learners were not able to develop any detail. As commented on above, they repeated the information and views as expressed in the text, and whilst doing so, they lost cohesion and a sense of purpose. This resulted in a few very short, or repetitive, responses that lacked the necessary development of ideas and placed them into the lower mark band or the lower end of the middle mark band.

The more successful learners wrote to a clear structure, with an appropriate introduction and conclusion with sequencing that reflected the purpose of the text. This meant that they produced fully functional responses that placed them into the upper mark band. Weaker responses, however, often lacked a sense of audience and were unable to use appropriate language and tone when writing a contribution online or they wrote personally to the two contributors in the stimulus text missing the point of the exercise. Although the task itself provided a good framework, less successful learners had limited control of structure which resulted in lack of cohesion and much repetition. These responses often lacked functionality placing them in the lower mark band for Form, Communication and Purpose.

Functionality requires an understanding of the purpose of the task and the need to communicate detailed ideas and information. This requires using appropriate tone and language for the intended audience and achieving clarity of communication. It also requires that the response is structured using appropriate organisational features, such as a clear introduction and conclusion.

Spelling and grammar were variable in quality. Some responses were highly accurate, whereas others contained too many errors for meaning to be supported. The majority of responses were reasonably accurate with the clarity of meaning only occasionally impaired. There were issues in a significant number of responses with non-capitalisation of proper nouns and incorrect sentencing. There were some learners who made basic errors in subject-verb agreement and lacked definite and indefinite articles.

## **Task 2**

Most learners were able to sustain an appropriate tone for an email to a cinema manager extolling the virtues of their favourite film with the purpose of winning a free pass to the cinema. Most maintained a realistic awareness of the intended audience. The stimulus text had been well used to help structure the responses. Many learners were very enthusiastic about the film they wanted the cinema to screen and offered good reasons to support their choice. A number of responses missed the point that they needed to refer to a specific film and wrote about genres. This was most likely because they had not read the question properly and they reflected that the stimulus text had named several different genres of film.

Successful learners were able to provide detailed descriptions to support their views and used the stimulus text as a framework, but extending their information beyond what the text contained. Secure answers understood that they were trying to persuade and convince the cinema manager that their choice of film was the best and should be shown on the big screen. These learners often developed their point of view by referring to the economic benefits that the cinema would gain and the increase in the cinema's popularity. These successful learners maintained a focused and relevant descriptive text which was convincing and cohesive. These learners were placed in the top mark band for Form, Communication and Purpose.

Less successful learners were unable to develop any detail in their response and used some information from the text wrongly and sometimes used inappropriate tone and language. Other less successful learners were repetitive making the same point several times. Another commonly occurring weakness was the learner not naming the actual film they were writing about. These less successful responses lost functionality and received low marks for Form, Communication and Purpose. On the other hand, some relatively short responses were placed in the top mark band as they were making clear points in a concise and compelling fashion.

Spelling, punctuation and grammar were generally secure enough not to compromise the meaning and coherence of many responses but there was a proportion where this was not the case. Common errors were, as in the previous task, mostly in capitalisation, sentence definition, missing omission apostrophes and confusion of words like "there and their", "are and our" and "you and use". Some responses lacked any punctuation and were simply written as one sentence. Some others were confused between the use of commas and full stops. Many learners continue to wrongly use a lower case "i" for the personal pronoun and add random capitals in the middle of words. Some struggled with the correct verb form and again a proportion neglected to use the definite or indefinite article. This latter point is particularly applicable to learners who speak English as an additional language. In these less successful responses the clarity of meaning was affected as was the ability to communicate information and ideas. This resulted in them being placed in the lower mark band for Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar.

Overall there were more strong, mature responses to both tasks and the need to address the purpose of the task to achieve functionality was generally better understood.

## **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 question 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 (e.g. formal letter, information leaflet, internet forum, magazine article) 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 L1 Writing paper.

A number of responses lost some functionality when the learner tried to write too much. Unless this is well planned it often leads to repetition and a growing number of errors. Detail does not necessarily require great length and quality is better than quantity in achieving functionality.

Several learners are being entered for the Level 1 Writing when they are clearly still at Entry Level. Centres are advised to avoid this as it can be very de-motivating for the learners concerned.

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 candidates that they can plan their work on the exam paper. This plan could also address the question of the purpose of the task so that the learner focuses on what information needs to be included in their response. This plan can also aid the learner in ensuring they have read the question correctly. They will just need to rule through this plan if they don't want it to be marked.

Pass mark for E103 in May 2017

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



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