

# Principal Examiners' Report

October 2017

Functional Skills English  
Writing Level 2 (E203)

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## **E203: Level 2 Writing October 2017 Principal Examiner Report**

This paper proved to be a successful test of Level 2 writing skills. The first task required candidates to respond to a letter of the week praising computer games. The second task required candidates to write an article on how to address problems in their local area. Both tasks were accessible and there were very few examples of misinterpretation seen.

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

### **Task 1**

Candidates responded well to this task, often using their own experience as gamers or parents. Opinion was split between those who thought that computer games were a good thing and those who thought that they were a waste of time.

The best responses were those which went into detail about their views and clearly explained the reasons for their opinions. These responses also developed ideas logically and were well structured, usually including an introduction explaining the purpose of their letter and then a summing up at the end.

Weaker responses lacked the clear detail and logical presentation of ideas needed for functionality. In these responses candidates struggled to express a clear point of view and often over-relied on the prompt material and so were unable to demonstrate the clear development of ideas. Other candidates wrote very long responses and these 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.

Most candidates used letter format with some accuracy and it was clear that this is being taught effectively in centres. Common issues included candidates not including their own address and using an incorrect close, e.g. 'kind regards'.

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. A few candidates wrote their entire response in block capitals, which had an impact on their mark for SPG.

## **Task 2**

All candidates were able to express a view on problems in their local area and outline possible solutions. Again, candidates were able to use their own experience and describe issues in their local areas, as well as using the ideas that were given to them. There were some very public spirited responses, with many candidates offering to help address the problems.

Stronger candidates were able to use an appropriate tone and style for an article and included a relevant heading. These candidates also developed their responses in some detail, successfully expanding upon the prompt material and offering their own ideas as requested in the second bullet point. Another feature of a successful response was a clear opening stating what the article was about and a summary at the end.

Weaker responses were those where candidates struggled to present information clearly. In some cases it was unclear what the issues were in the local area. Some candidates over-relied on the prompt material and did little more than copy it out, limiting the mark they could receive for developing their ideas. Weaker responses also generally demonstrated limited control of sentence structure and made haphazard use of organisational features such as paragraphs.

The full range of marks was awarded for spelling, punctuation and grammar. There was a similar pattern 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 'camaras' and 'center'.

## **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. If candidates wish to do this in the answer booklet then they should just draw a line through their plan to indicate that they don't want it to be marked.

Prior to the test all candidates should be given opportunities to practice writing in various formats and 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 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 October 2017

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



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