

Principal Examiner's Report

October 2017

Pearson Edexcel Functional Skills
English Writing Level 1 (E103)

Edexcel and BTEC Qualifications

Edexcel and BTEC qualifications are awarded by Pearson, the UK's largest awarding body. We provide a wide range of qualifications including academic, vocational, occupational and specific programmes for employers. For further information visit our qualifications websites at www.edexcel.com or www.btec.co.uk. Alternatively, you can get in touch with us using the details on our contact us page at www.edexcel.com/contactus.

Pearson: helping people progress, everywhere

Pearson aspires to be the world's leading learning company. Our aim is to help everyone progress in their lives through education. We believe in every kind of learning, for all kinds of people, wherever they are in the world. We've been involved in education for over 150 years, and by working across 70 countries, in 100 languages, we have built an international reputation for our commitment to high standards and raising achievement through innovation in education. Find out more about how we can help you and your students at: www.pearson.com/uk

October 2017

Publications Code E103_01_1710_ER

All the material in this publication is copyright

© Pearson Education Ltd 2016

Principal Examiner Report: L1 Writing July 2017

Introduction

This paper worked well in testing Level 1 Writing Skills. The two tasks set were:

- Write a letter giving your views about the plans to sell Jubilee Park.
- Write an email of complaint to Kate Alpen explaining the problems you had with food and service at her restaurant

This paper engaged candidates and the majority responded very successfully. Both tasks were accessible, with the source material offering support to weaker candidates, allowing them to work their way into a response. There were very few responses where no attempt had been made to answer the tasks.

Task 1

This was quite successful overall however not many learners achieved marks in the higher band because development of points was often lacking. A minority used signposting to expand their own ideas but the majority of learners failed to add to the ideas in the rubric. There were some learners who completely lifted the text with only one or two sentences in their own words. Letter format was weak for many with some leaving their own address off, writing it incorrectly or in the wrong format. However, as a personal reply wasn't necessary, this didn't automatically result in the learner not still being able to achieve a mark in the top band. Some clearly tried to give reasons for their views but sequencing and confused sentences meant that a high percentage of learners scored marks in the middle band.

Although letter layout was often correct for second language speaker responses, unfortunately, weak grammar and a lack of clarity kept these learners in the middle/lower bands.

A further concern is that many letters (even in the top band) omitted the correct closure i.e. Yours sincerely, and ended the response with just their name, 'Kind regards', 'Yours faithfully' or 'Many thanks'. Centres must ensure learners know when to use 'Yours sincerely' and 'Yours faithfully' and emphasise that 'Kind regards' and 'Many thanks' are only to be used in an email.

Stronger learners managed to pick out some relevant points from the question and some really did well on expansion of points relating to the effects on the environment and family life if there was no park.

Strong Answers

There was a clear introduction. Learners explained that they were writing to discuss their views about the plan to sell off Jubilee Park. They said whether they agreed or disagreed with the plan and then rather than just repeating the rubric, they put forward some nice ideas about still having the development but reducing the amount of new houses and keeping part of the park.

These learners thought about both sides of the problem and came up with ideas to please both parties. They closed the letter by respectfully thanking Jeff Rutherford for listening to their views and there was good structure to the letter. The very best answers showed clear evidence of planning their work and the careful construction of a detailed response: these scripts invariably read very well.

Task 2

This was a really engaging task which was well written with just enough scaffolding to allow learners to develop independent ideas. The more able learners referred back to personal experiences and wrote nice emails using the correct tone to get their points across without being rude and inappropriate. There were lots of anniversaries, birthdays and family get togethers. Even though there was minimal scaffolding, at the lower level, there was evidence of lifting from the text which brought scores down. There was also some long some long rambling sentences and the tone wasn't appropriate for the audience.

Strong Answers

The best answers had a really descriptive opening which set the scene for the special occasion booked at the restaurant. They then described in detail a number of different problems with the food and service. The email ended with the learner clearly stating what they wanted Kate to do. They generally requested a refund or a discount on their next meal there. These answers read the best and contrasted with the more generic answers.

Weak Answers

Learners failed to set the scene properly and said little more than "there were problems with the food and service". Tone was also inappropriate, there was a lot of "get this sorted" or "if you don't get it sorted I'll sue you". There was no real close and it wasn't clear what they wanted Kate to do.

SPG General

The majority of learners had very weak spelling and use of punctuation resulting in receiving marks in the lower bands. Many also produced long sentences with little or no punctuation making it harder to follow and develop ideas clearly.

Common problems included subject/verb agreement. Candidates had particular problems with "was/were". The correct use of articles proved difficult for many learners. The use of lowercase 'i' instead of 'I' continues to be a common error. There was a considerable number of second language speakers who spelled words correctly and applied punctuation correctly but found the use of tense problematic.

Recommendations for Centres

This is a Functional Skills test, so learners will only be rewarded for writing responses that are fit for purpose. 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. letter and email) 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.

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. They will just need to rule through this if they don't want it to be marked.

Tips to Centres for Improving Learner Performance

Although it was reassuring to see some very good responses and that centres have obviously been practicing writing letters and emails, centres/learners may benefit from addressing the following points:

DURING THE TEST

1. Use a dictionary
2. Plan responses by using the bullets as sub headings; jot down ideas underneath each of these to avoid repetition of rubric and help structure the final response
3. When repeating words that are in the question, re-read the question to check spelling
4. Proof read afterwards to check spelling (especially the key words that are in the question paper) and that all bullets have been addressed

IN CENTRE

1. Get candidates to improve time management by sitting mock tests using past papers
2. Get learners to read letters and emails to familiarise themselves with the different formats
3. Practice writing articles and internet contributions, focusing on audience and tone
4. Dedicate more time to assessing a candidate's control of English before entering them for the test

FCP

1. Identifying the purpose and audience
2. Writing a good introduction that sets the scene
3. Making a statement: learners need to be encouraged to make a statement then develop and support the reasons for making the statement
4. Sequencing: how to use bullets in the question to aid development and sequencing of ideas
5. Organisation – an introduction, body text and conclusion for all letters

SPG

1. Homophones: focus needed on the spelling of common homophones such as "their" and there"
2. Capitals: correct use of capitalisation, especially names of people and 'I' not 'i'
3. Capitals: do not use in the middle of words or sentences
4. Punctuation: using full stops instead of commas to break up sentences and avoid 'run on' sentences
5. Punctuation: absolutely no comma splicing
6. Connectives: suggest alternatives to 'and'
7. Subject verb agreement: 'we were' not 'we was'
8. Are/our, as well/aswell, a lot/alot

Pass mark for E103 in October 2017

Maximum mark	25
Pass mark	16
UMS mark	6



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

