

# Principal Examiners' Report

May 2016

Functional Skills English  
Writing Level 2 (E203)

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## **E203: Level 2 Writing May 2016 Principal Examiner Report**

This paper worked very well as a test of Level 2 writing skills. The first task asked candidates to write an article about what they considered to be their greatest achievement. The second task required learners to respond to an 'Email of the week' about housing issues faced by young people.

Both tasks were accessible and there were very few examples of misinterpretation seen. Some learners wrote about fictitious achievements for Task 1, such as climbing Mount Everest, but these responses were not penalised.

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

### **Task 1**

Learners responded very positively to this task and produced articles that described their main achievements convincingly and proudly. The range of topics was truly impressive, with raising money for charities being the most popular theme. Other learners wrote moving responses about caring for relatives or proudly detailed sporting or academic achievements.

The best responses were those which attempted the register appropriate for an article rather than just recount events. These responses also used vocabulary appropriate to the task and adopted a lively tone that made the reader want to know what happened.

Less functional responses often lacked clear structure and organisation. These responses often lacked logical sequencing of ideas and sometimes became repetitious and unclear. A few learners forgot that they were writing an article and produced a response that read more like a story.

Learners 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.

It is expected that learners will begin their article with an appropriate heading and most were able to do this. The tone for the article could be quite informal and there was good use of direct address to engage the audience.

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. The misspelling of 'achievement' as 'acheivement' was seen on a number of occasions. 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 on this task included 'writting', 'alot' and 'belive' as well as confusion with words such as 'their' and 'there'.

## **Task 2**

Most learners were clearly familiar with housing issues and responded positively to this task, building successfully on the prompt material.

Stronger learners were able to develop their ideas logically and produce a clearly structured piece of writing. These learners also developed their opinion in some detail. Another feature of a successful response was a clear opening stating what the email was about and a closing comment summing up the learner's opinions.

Weaker responses were those where learners struggled to express their opinions clearly. On occasion it was hard to work out what learners were writing about. Other learners just repeated ideas from the source material and added very little material of their own. Weaker responses often demonstrated limited control of sentence structure and made little use of organisational features.

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. It was disappointing to see that a large number of learners made mistakes with words that were in the prompt material. There were several different spellings of 'Kindon' seen, with 'Kingdon' probably being the most common.

## **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. On this paper some learners seemed to have prioritised Task 1 and then not left enough time for Task 2.

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 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 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 May 2016

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

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