

# Senior Standards Verifier Feedback Report

Edexcel Functional Skills  
English Speaking, Listening and  
Communication Levels 1 & 2  
(E101, E201, ENC01, ENC02)

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## **Functional Skills English Speaking, Listening and Communication Levels 1 & 2 (E101 & E201)**

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This has been another successful year for English Functional Skills and our Standards Verifiers (SVs) have visited over 400 centres nationwide. We should like to thank centres for making our Standards Verifiers welcome and for allowing visits to take place during very busy periods throughout the academic year.

The large majority of visits were very successful, with fewer issues relating to Lead Internal Verifier (LIV) registration and Online Standardisation for Centre Assessors (OSCA) training, although there were some centres where this process needed to be renewed and the Lead Internal Verifier Declaration Form completed and submitted to Pearson. More details relating to OSCA and LIV registration follow below.

### **Learner Management**

The majority of centres have been using the correct assessment forms and made records available for the Standards Verifier to observe. It is important that centres keep their assessment records for three years – either electronically or in hard copy format. By keeping these records, centres will be in a position to show the SV the records on the centre's next visit, which is usually once every three years (or sooner if an issue was identified during a visit and required an action point to be met).

In some situations, SVs reported that the size of groups were too large to assess sufficiently. It is recommended that during discussions the group size should be 3 to 5, in order for the assessment to be effectively recorded and assessed.

Often, Assessment Record Sheets were not completed in enough detail. It is important that the task is outlined on the form and that a summative comment is provided. Summative comments are a sign of good practice. They should relate to an individual learner's performance and include at least some personalised detail. The summative comment should explain and justify how a learner met the assessment objectives.

Sometimes, the observed assessment activities were too short to allow for all assessment objectives to be observed and met comfortably. Observations by SVs show that discussions lasting between 15 and 20 minutes (at either level) and presentations at Level 2 lasting around 5 minutes provide sufficient opportunity for learners to prove their ability to meet all assessment criteria.

Careful consideration should be given to the grouping of learners for assessment activities. If there is a learner who is not as confident as others, this learner may have more success if they chair the discussion or complete the task with a different group of peers.

In a situation where centres have few entries, learners can be assisted by their peers – even if the peers are not being assessed. However, the Assessor must not be actively involved in the assessment activities.

As Functional Skills is certificated as a stand-alone qualification, all areas must be assessed independently of any other qualification. For example, GCSE records cannot be accepted as evidence for Functional Skills. Similar tasks may be used if appropriate to Functional Skills assessment objectives, but recording and administration *must* be kept separate and made available for scrutiny by an allocated SV at appropriate times.

The relevant Functional Skills Assessment Record Sheets must be made available for the SV to verify. Blank Assessment Record Sheets for use in centres and exemplars of completed Assessment Record Sheets can be found in the Quality Assurance Handbook.

## **Assessment**

The majority of SV reported that national standards have been correctly applied for the vast majority of centres. It is essential that your allocated SV observes assessments taking place (as detailed in the Quality Assurance Handbook). If your SV is unable to observe assessments (live or mock ones), the centre certification would be suspended until evidence of assessment has been produced.

During this academic year's visits, most centres organised groups of learners to complete discussions for Levels 1 and/or 2 or presentations for Level 2. However, it became apparent that some centres are not scheduling their assessments formally, but completing assessments ad-hoc. Centres must schedule assessments in advance to allow learners to engage with the task and realise the importance of it. FS English Speaking, Listening & Communication is a formal assessment and must be treated as such.

On the Assessment Record Sheets, centres are required to provide details of the assessment task. It is good practice, seen in many centres, to provide as much details as possible of the task, attach learners' notes, handouts or, if used, hard copies of multimedia presentations.

Occasionally, Assessment Record Sheets had not been completed in enough detail and summative comments were identical for all learners. A personalised summative comment should be included on the each Assessment Record Sheet. Please see comments above relating the completion of learner Assessment Record Sheets and refer to the Quality Assurance Handbook and OSCA commentaries for exemplars.

For smaller centres with a limited number of learners, assessments can involve peers and colleagues who are not being assessed, but the Assessor and LIV must not take part themselves. Some centres film assessments taking place. This is not a requirement but is a helpful practice in case learners are not available for your SV to observe during the verification visit.

Standards Verifiers agreed that vast majority of those learners who had gained a pass for either level had met the required standards, but often the duration of the assessment was brought to the centre attention as not sufficient.

## Internal Verification

This is an area which has seen much improvement this year, but remains a cause for concern in some cases. It is vital that a Lead Internal Verifier (LIV) is appointed in each centre, the appointed LIV is registered on OSCA and completes the relevant training. Registration needs to be renewed and training completed every academic year, with a Lead Internal Verifier Declaration Form submitted to [fsassessment@pearson.com](mailto:fsassessment@pearson.com)

The majority of action points given to centres following the SV visit were due to centres not having a LIV appointed or the LIV's registration having expired. Centres need to ensure that their LIV renews their OSCA registration after 1 September and completes the yearly training before the centre is ready to receive certificates for their learners. Failure to do so will delay learners' certification.

In a small number of instances, centres had to cancel a visit due to unforeseen circumstances. Should this happen, an alternative date for an SV visit must be arranged. If an alternative date for visit is not arranged, the centre's certification may be suspended.

Occasionally, LIVs had left a centre and a replacement member of staff had not been appointed to this role. This is also an area which centres must be aware of and, if there is staff movement or re-appointment, the newly appointed LIV must complete the accreditation process as set out in the Quality Assurance Handbook.

New materials are made available for OSCA every year and it is the LIV's responsibility to make these available to all members of staff involved in the assessment and internal verification of Speaking, Listening & Communication for Functional Skills as part of the centre internal standardisation. They are valuable training materials and help to assure consistency throughout the assessment period.

In centres where there are few learners, it was found that the LIV was also the main Assessor. This is not acceptable, as an Assessor cannot internally verify themselves. A person other than the Assessor needs to be appointed as a LIV and should monitor the Assessor(s) during the academic year. Where this proves impossible, centres are advised to ask another nearby centre to assist with the internal verification process or contact FS Assessment for further guidance.

Each centre with a unique centre number is required to have an accredited LIV. If a centre has satellite sites, so long as the centre number is the same, the LIV can cover all sites. If the satellite sites have their own unique centre numbers, they are considered centres in their own right and need an accredited LIV in order to be able to claim certificates. One LIV can be registered in more than one centre. For further details, see Quality Assurance Handbook.

It is essential that records are kept, detailing when internal verification has taken place or is scheduled for the future. Often, SVs reported that centres had not kept any records of LIV activities and thus the requirement was not met. Centres should adopt an active internal verification strategy to cover all Assessors, levels and locations. The LIV should be in a position to provide advice to and support all

Assessors should be able to identify the correct application of the assessment criteria. Assessors should be provided with feedback and evidence of this should be kept for standards verification.

The OSCA and LIV registration process and duties are detailed in the Quality Assurance Handbook in an easy-to-use step-by-step guide. It is highly recommended that all members of staff involved with the assessment and internal verification of Functional Skills have access to this document and frequently refer to it throughout the assessment period.

Evidence of the internal verification process and the sampling of Assessment Record Sheets must be kept in order to meet the requirements of standards verification.

## **Resources**

On the whole, most Standards Verifiers reported that the ratio of learners to assessors was appropriate; although, as mentioned earlier, sometimes group sizes were too large in order to assess individual contributions sufficiently. Whole classes can act as an 'audience' for Level 2 presentations, but can be a distraction during assessed discussions. Those learners taking part in discussions should be provided with a suitable, quiet location, which is free from outside distraction.

Learners should be encouraged to prepare fully for their assessments and can take notes in with them. It is important to add that presentations should not be read, but notes can be used as a prompt. Again, Assessors must not be involved in the assessment activities other than simple prompting in the rare case of learners not being able to continue (for more details, see instructions in the Sample Assessment Materials).

Those learners who had prepared multimedia presentations were generally successful, but learners should avoid simply reading what is on the screen. Each slide should provide the learner with the opportunity of some spontaneous and sustained contribution. It is important to note that the use of multimedia or other devices is not a requirement for FS English.

A wide range of subject matter was observed by our Standards Verifiers and some commented specifically on successful practice:

*"The Assessor, LIV and I observed four Level 1 learners during their formal and informal discussions. Exemplary practice was observed throughout with both the LIV and Assessor taking detailed notes. The assessor did not interrupt or prompt during the exercise. It was clearly evident that learners were well prepared for their formal discussion with reference made to bullet points listed during class. The resources provided for both activities were well considered, attractive and accessible."*

*"The duration of both activities lasted beyond the suggested 30 minutes and each was naturally brought to an end. All learners were able to make relevant and sustained contributions to the discussions. Subject matter was engaging and very functional."*

*"An excellent range of functional tasks were presented. I observed one group of learners discussing the most appropriate age to start driving. Another discussed Health and Safety in the workplace and how it could be improved. There was a presentation about 'Animal Cruelty' and another about 'A holiday destination I would recommend'. The tasks were varied and interesting."*

*"The learners observed (with the LIV and tutor) were very enthusiastic for their Functional Skills Speaking, Listening and Communication assessments. They were polite, well-prepared and very keen to demonstrate the skills that they have developed through the excellent guidance and support of their tutor."*

Centres should be congratulated on the wide range of appropriate and interesting tasks employed.

### **Assessment Security and Administration**

Some SVs reported that centres did not always comply with all necessary assessment security and administration requirements.

Many of the issues relating to assessment security and administration are handled by the centre's Examinations Officer, but in some instances 'examination conditions' were not as rigorous as they should have been.

The Examinations Officer should be made aware of when the assessments are to take place and the necessary signs and examination posters should be clearly displayed.

Assessors are advised to ensure that learners have been entered for the correct level and are sufficiently prepared for each level – this is appropriate for all areas of assessment, including the Reading and Writing papers. Initial Assessment Tools and exemplars are available on-line for all levels of Functional Skills assessment.

The Examinations Officer should keep a log of unusual incidents or suspected malpractice. Assessors and the LIV should inform the Examinations Officer of any concerns. During centre visits, some Assessors were not aware of the correct procedure. Often, the centre's own Examinations Officer can provide more advice and specific details.

Centres should also make themselves aware of the 'Special Requirements and Access Arrangements' policy, which is available on-line to ensure that all learners are provided with the opportunities available to them. Please do remember that there is a wide range of materials and resources available on-line for all areas of assessment.

## **Reports and Action Points**

Once a visit has taken place, the SV writes a detailed report about the visit. This is then sent to their Supervisor, the Senior Standards Verifier and Pearson. Centres should receive a copy of their report within 10 working days.

During a visit, an SV may identify an action point for a specific area relating to the delivery and assessment of Functional Skills Speaking, Listening & Communication. The SV will have informed the centre of the action point(s) during the visit and give further details on the report. Certification is withheld until the SV confirms the completion of the action point(s).

It is essential that if a centre has any action point(s) on their report, they give their urgent attention to meeting the set deadline and advise their SV when they are ready to prove the completion, so that the SV can advise Pearson and certification can be released.

Some reports contain recommendations. These are points where the SV has made a suggestion for continued improvement and development. Centres should act upon these recommendations and provide evidence of addressing them when the centre is re-visited in the future.

As a team of Standards Verifiers, we have very much enjoyed visiting centres throughout the year and look forward to meeting more in the coming months.

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