

**Pearson LCCI
Level 1 English for Business
(Reading and Writing)
(ASE1041)**

**Annual Qualification
Review
2013/2014**

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INTRODUCTION

The annual qualification review provides qualification-specific support and guidance to centres. This information is designed to help teachers preparing to teach the subject and to help candidates preparing to take the examination.

The reviews are published in September and take into account candidate performance, demonstrated in both on demand and series examinations, over the preceding 12 months. Global pass rates are published so you can measure the performance of your centre against these.

The review identifies candidate strengths and weaknesses by syllabus topic area and provides examples of good and poorer candidate responses. It should therefore be read in conjunction with details of the structure and learning objectives contained within the syllabus for this qualification found on the website.

The review also identifies any actual or proposed changes to the syllabus or question types together with their implications.

PASS RATE STATISTICS

The following statistics are based on the performance of candidates who sat this qualification between 1 September 2013 and 31 August 2014.

Global pass rate 92.9%*

Grade distributions of candidates achieving pass or higher

Pass 11.7%

Merit 36.9%

Distinction 44.3%

* This figure excludes absences on the day of the exam

GENERAL STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

English for Business (Reading and Writing), as its name implies, tests both reading and writing skills.

In regard to candidates taking this examination at Level 1 it can be stated that generally reading ability is much stronger than writing ability. This is, in fact, quite understandable as the passive skill of reading is almost certain to be at a higher level than the active skill of writing for individuals with this level of English. That some candidates perform as well as they do on the written sections of the examination (mainly Question 1) is something to be admired.

Question 1 is a challenging task for candidates at this level as they have to produce a document which is appropriate, and serves its purpose, in response to a realistic business situation. To achieve this at this level requires making maximum use of the linguistic resources which a candidate has. A capable candidate realises this condition and does not attempt more than s/he is capable of linguistically. A simple answer which conveys the message required is more successful than an answer which attempts greater complexity of expression but because of errors of language is obscure in meaning. Of course, candidates who possess more extensive and more accurate language knowledge should display this in their answer as it will increase their chances of a higher grade.

In terms of the other questions in the examination, i.e. Questions 2, 3 and 4, where understanding the content of written material is tested, most candidates do well. Often they can compensate on these questions for a poor or weak performance on Question 1.

TEACHING POINTS BY SYLLABUS TOPIC

In regard to Question 1 important elements being tested are:

- (i) following instructions provided regarding the aim of the task and the required amount of output
- (ii) laying out the document appropriately
- (iii) adopting an appropriate style and tone
- (iv) and avoiding excessive 'lifting' from the rubric provided. In addition to these the accuracy of the language produced is being tested.

If these elements are looked at in relation to the answers given for a specific question, i.e. Question 1 of the Series 3 (2014) paper, certain points emerge. This question required candidates to respond to a letter in a local paper criticising the standard of a holiday provided by a local travel company. The writer had to refute the allegations made in the initial letter and also demand an apology in a future issue of the paper. The quality of response of candidates to this question was very wide. The best candidates fully noted what was required in their letter and, therefore, scored high marks on content. Average candidates tended just to list the complaints which had been mentioned but did not explain why these complaints were not true. Weak candidates completely misunderstood the task and, for example, imagined they were the owner of the hotel where the complainant had stayed, rather than a manager in the country where the complainant lived.

The point which can be drawn from this range of responses is the importance of the candidate understanding what the task requires in terms of who the writer is, and what the purpose of the communication is.

In relation to Question 2 the elements being tested are:

- (i) ability to understand a text by confirming the validity of statements with supporting information
- (ii) accurate written transfer of that supporting information from the text, avoiding using unnecessary words.

This is a demanding question which can serve to highlight the best candidates. As the answers which are acceptable are very restricted a very careful reading of the text is required to achieve a high score. However, even average candidates could frequently achieve higher marks if they adhered rigorously to the rubric of the question. This states clearly that the supporting material for their answers should not exceed six words. Despite this clear instruction some candidates

breach it and, therefore, are penalised. Another source of unnecessary loss of marks is that candidates transcribe material from the text inaccurately although they are clearly informed that they must write the exact words used. Thus, for example, in the same Series paper cited above one answer in Question 2 required as supporting material the word 'waitresses'. Some candidates instead wrote 'waitress' which meant that the answer did not receive a mark.

Question 3 tests the ability to read and understand a table or chart and then process the data to answer questions based on it.

Generally, candidates perform well on this question showing an ability to deal with questions of some complexity. Some candidates, however, do lose marks because of their failure to follow instructions in the question rubric. This requires candidates to answer using only a single word, figure or name. If candidates do not do this they are penalised. For an example, again taken from the paper cited above, one answer required the word 'Germany'. If candidates wrote 'Made in Germany' then they would not receive a mark for that question. Also candidates should pay careful attention to the form of the question. If a question requires a 'True/False' response then this is the form in which the answer should be given, i.e. a 'No/Yes' response would be incorrect.

The last question on the examination paper, Question 4, requires candidates to understand written material and from it select appropriate data to complete a document, e.g. a form or chart.

When completing the document this must be done using concise and accurate wording so that the document is fit for purpose. This question serves as a differentiator between candidates of different levels of ability. A good example of this is provided from the paper previously cited. In Question 4 for this examination candidates were required to complete a form for an order of flowers. In the information provided for the question it was stated that the order would be 'four times our usual order' for certain flowers. As the usual order was 4 boxes of red roses and white roses the candidates had to realize that this order would involve 16 boxes of red and white roses. The best candidates understood this and completed the form correctly. Weaker candidates failed to take this information into account and filled in four boxes on the form for red and white roses. This clearly indicates the importance of candidates reading the provided information with great care in order to perform well on this question.

Another point which candidates, and those who prepare them, should be aware of, for this question is the importance of reading any instructions regarding the way in which the form should be filled in. Thus, for this question, in the Series paper previously cited, above the form it said '(PLEASE COMPLETE IN CAPITALS)'. If candidates failed to follow this instruction then one mark was deducted from the total gained for that question. In future, in line with Pearson's policy of positive marking, one mark would be added if the instruction was followed. The situation will be the same in such cases where candidates are asked to fill in information on the form by date or alphabetical order. Therefore, candidates should pay careful attention as to how they are instructed to enter the information in the form, chart etc. Also when transcribing the information the candidates should insure that this is done completely accurately since in real life this can be a key issue, e.g. in terms of an address.

EXAMPLES OF CANDIDATE RESPONSES

This section will illustrate the performances of candidates who received a Fail, Pass, Merit or Distinction grade for a particular question of this examination. The examples, which are taken from actual candidates' papers, relate to the Series 3 examination of 2014, to which reference has previously been made. All the examples refer to Question 1 of this paper since this is the question where the differences between the linguistic ability of candidates is most clearly illustrated.

Question 1 of the paper in question was as follows:

Situation

You work as the Assistant Manager of a travel firm, called Carefree Holidays, in your home town. The local newspaper, the 'Weekly Post', has recently published an article listing a number of complaints from some of your customers. They say that, during their holiday:

- hotels were often a long way from the beach
- day trips from resorts were either overbooked or not available
- Carefree Holiday's representatives were most unhelpful
- hotel menus changed very little from day to day.

You have checked all these complaints, and found that they are completely false.

Task

Write a letter of between 150 and 200 words to the editor of the 'Weekly Post'. Give the true facts about each complaint. Point out the damage the article has done to your company's good name, and the possible loss of future business. Ask the editor to write a full apology in the next edition of the newspaper.

You may invent suitable addresses.

Lay out your answer as a **letter** in the space below.

Candidates are awarded points in relation to the following categories:

- Layout – 5 marks
- Content – 15 marks
- Style and Tone – 4 marks
- Accuracy – 6 marks

The first example of a candidate's answer to the above question is that of a candidate who did not receive a pass mark for this question.

Carefree Holidays
23 Back Street, LA
LA08 100 Los Angeles

6 June 2014

Weekly Post
36 World Street
WS09 900, London

Dear Sir

I'm writing this letter to say apologised from our travel firm about the true facts in each complaint on your letter. Besides your point up the damage the article has done to my company's good name, and the we possible loss of future business.

Furthermore, our travel agency will get a bad reputation in travel agency because some of the complaint we have is Hotels were often a long way from the beach, our representatives were most unhelpful, hotel menus changed very little from day to day and day trips from resorts were either overbooked or not available.

Moreover, I having checking all these complaints, and i found that they are completely false. Hance, on our firm recognise what we are able to identify because you know them already or you have been told about that. So, from our firm decided to give 100% on our commitment to this all thing gonna not happened again.

We hope we will get full apology from your side in our mistake in next edition of newspaper, thank You.

Yours faithfully
Signature provided
Candidate's Name
Assistant manager travel firm

In relation to the category of 'Layout' the candidate received full marks. There was a sender's address, an internal address, a suitable date, the opening and closing of the letter matched, i.e. 'Dear Sir' and 'Yours faithfully', and a signature and job title were provided.

For 'Content' the candidate received 8 marks. In the second paragraph the candidate lists the four complaints the original letter had mentioned, although the language is entirely lifted from the rubric of the question and there is no attempt to explain why the complaints are false. This paragraph also has the phrase 'our travel firm will get a bad reputation' which receives a point as one of the content points concerns 'Damage to reputation'. In paragraph 3 the candidate receives 1 mark for saying these complaints are false. The language used to express this point is entirely lifted from the rubric but the content point is still awarded. The last paragraph receives two marks for 'We hope we will get full apology from your side.....in next edition of newspaper' as points were awarded in the mark scheme for asking for an apology in the next issue of the newspaper.

For 'Style and Tone' the candidate received only 1 mark out of a possible 4. The mark scheme says that a candidate deserves only 1 mark when the letter is 'poorly composed; not suited to task; poor style and no awareness of relationships; clumsy but some effort shown' and this is a good summary of what this candidate has produced. Much of the letter is incomprehensible and what language is accurate is almost entirely lifted wholesale from the rubric. The first sentence of the letter is very confusing and it sounds as if the writer is apologising rather than asking for an apology. In real life this letter would confuse the recipient and, therefore, fail in its purpose.

Because of the very large number of linguistic errors in grammar, spelling, vocabulary, punctuation etc. this candidate received no marks for 'Accuracy'. A candidate receives a loss of half a mark for each language error (the same error is not punished twice) and, therefore, if a candidate, such as this one, has twelve or more individual errors he or she scores no marks for this category.

Thus, overall this candidate scores a total of 14 (5+8+ 1+0) and is, therefore, a marginal fail. This candidate's answer is a good illustration of the fact that a candidate with poor linguistic resources can still receive a reasonable score for this question if the layout of the letter is correct. This candidate received 5 marks just for setting out the letter correctly and an awareness of this fact by weaker candidates and those who prepare them is important.

The second candidate discussed received a pass mark for his/her answer which was as follows:

Candidate's Name
Assistant Manager
73 Main Street
London LA1 66F

6 June 2014

Editor
Weekly Post
108 Cantwell Street
Washington WA1 9LF

Dear Sir

I am [candidate's name] as the Assistant Manager of a travel firm. I would like to inform you about a complaints from some of my customers on local newspaper the Weekly Post has recently published. In your article you published very different term the original happen. It's make my customers very angry with my company service.

Therefore, them make a complaint to my office on what they not feeling good. On the complaint is, their said what happen during their holiday:

- to go to the beach they have to often a long way, actually we have a short-cut way
- day trips from resorts were either overbooked or not available
- Carefree Holiday's representatives were most unhelpful
- hotel menus changed very little from day to day

Hence, I need you as published of local newspaper do some thing to clean my company again. Because when I check the complain is not true. I want my company's has good name because that is possible loss of my future business. And I will bankrupt. And I also want you to write a full apology in the next edition of the newspaper to make my hotel have a good name. If you have anything just call me.

Yours faithfully,
Candidate's signature
Candidate's name
Assistant Manager

This candidate received 5 marks for 'Layout' as everything was correct.

For 'Content' 10 marks were awarded because in addition to the listing of the complaints there was in one case an attempt to explain why it was false, i.e. 'actually we have a short-cut way'. Also the candidate added other required points such as 'possible loss of future business' and the damage to the company's reputation, i.e. 'I want my company's good name'.

In regard to 'Style and Tone' the candidate received a mark of 2. The candidate clearly understood the situation and what the task required, unlike the previous candidate who was uncertain about this. The mark scheme states that for a mark of two in this category an answer shows itself 'adequate for task; some evidence of planning; may not have paragraphs; sentences mainly simple'. In some ways this candidate's answer is slightly superior to this description since it does have paragraphs and there is some attempt to construct more complex sentences. However, the obscurity of meaning at certain points makes the awarding of just a pass mark for this category justifiable.

The lack of clarity is connected with the large number of linguistic mistakes. These are not as numerous or as disruptive to the conveyance of meaning as those displayed by the previous candidate but are sufficient in number to lead to the awarding of no marks for the category of 'Accuracy'.

Thus the final score for Question 1 for this candidate was 17 (5+10+2+0) and, therefore, a pass mark.

The next candidate whose answer for Question 1 will be looked at received a mark for this question which corresponds to a Merit grade. This candidate's answer was as follows:

Carefree Holidays
11 Green Street
AX7 031 London

6 July 2014

Weekly Post
01 Main Street
AY1 375 London

Dear Editor

I am writing with regard to article which was publication in your newspaper on 5 July 2014.

In this article are bad facts about trip holiday. You write that during holiday hotel were often a long way from the beach but it is not true because away was one kilometre. Next complaint concerning day-trips from resorts. This trip was booked but customers not arrive for them. In addition are complaints on our representatives. This is not true what our customer speak you. Our staff are qualifications and always helpful. Hotels menus are changed very little because a customer can this wishes from a cooker agreement on their wishes.

This article gives a bad name to my company, then could you rectification the article. I would like to know if you write a full apology in the next edition of your newspaper?

This article give my company loss of future business, then I would like ask you about money compensation. You published an article give situation then I have less customers.

I am look forward to hearing from you.

Yours faithfully
Candidate's signature
Candidate's name
Assistant Manager

In regard to 'Layout' this candidate received 5 marks as everything was included.

For 'Content' 12½ marks were awarded. The extra marks compared to the previous candidate relate to good opening and closing sentences. Also compared to the answers of previous candidates this answer made a better attempt to explain why the complaints made were incorrect.

For 'Style and Tone' a mark of 2 was given. There was a clear attempt to fulfil the requirements of the task. Paragraphs were employed but the sentence structure was weak which limited the grade awarded for this category. This was connected with the existence of numerous linguistic errors resulting in the awarding of only a ½ mark for 'Accuracy'.

The total for this question was 20 (5+12½+2+½) and, therefore, a Merit level mark for this answer. This illustrates an important point about this question, which is that marks received for layout and content can compensate for weaknesses in linguistic expression as long as these latter are not so severe as to totally obscure meaning. One example of this latter point occurs in the last sentence of paragraph two of this candidate's answer where no content point was awarded due to obscurity of expression.

The last candidate answer to be considered is that relating to one which was awarded a distinction level mark. The answer was as follows:

Candidate's name
Assistant Manager
Carefree Holidays
Bankowa Street 3
Katowice
40-060

6th June, 2014

Head Editor
Weekly Post
Katonicka Street 1
Katowice
40-070

Dear Sir/Madam,

Unfortunately, I must strongly disagree with information about our firm that you published in your newspaper in the article of 5th June. In your article you wrote that our hotels were often a long way from the beach, day trips from our hotels were either overbooked or not available, Carefree Holiday's representatives were most unhelpful, hotel menus changed very little from day to day. Let me disagree with that.

I would like to inform you that in our hotels were a short way from beaches. Also, trips from resorts are always available. Carefree Holiday's representatives were helpful hotel menus changed every day. The untrue comments you published have bad influence on our company's good name. I want your written apologies in the next issue of your paper on the front page.

I am forced to inform you that if you do not print the apology we will have no choice but to take this to court, and demand a compensation.

I am looking forward to your prompt response.

Yours faithfully
Candidate's signature
Candidate's name
Assistant Manager
Carefree Holidays

5 marks were awarded for 'Layout' as this was completely adequate.

13 marks were received for 'Content' as nearly all the points required by the mark scheme were covered. The opening and closing sentences of the letter was particularly good.

For 'Style and Tone' 3 marks were awarded. For this score the mark scheme states 'above average; appropriate to task; logical and clear; paragraphs and some complex sentences' which this answer clearly exhibits.

In regards to 'Accuracy' this answer received a score of 3. Compared to the previous answers looked at, this one has far fewer mistakes and none of the mistakes made actually obscure meaning.

The total score for this candidate is 24 (5+13+3+3) and thus equivalent to a distinction level grade.

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