

Principal Examiners' Report

November 2017

Functional Skills English
Writing Level 2 (E203)

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E203: Level 2 Writing October 2017 Principal Examiner Report

The paper proved to be an effective test of Level 2 writing skills. The first task required candidates to write an article, giving advice on how to perform well in an interview. The second task required candidates to write an email, giving their opinion on what should be included in a local transport plan. Both tasks were accessible and the candidates engaged well with them.

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

Task 1

Candidates responded well to this task and most included article conventions, such as a heading. It was clear that the large majority of candidates had experience of interviews that they could draw on, as well as using the ideas provided by the prompt material. Most candidates wrote in an appropriate tone that was designed to capture the interest of the reader.

Strong responses were those in which ideas were clearly developed and explained. These responses also had a clear structure including an introduction explaining the purpose of the article and a conclusion summing up the main points. Successful responses also followed a clear structure, e.g. by writing one paragraph per idea.

Weaker responses lacked the clear development needed to be functional. These responses often lacked logical sequencing of ideas and sometimes became repetitious and unclear. Some candidates wrote very long responses and lost control over sentence structure and content.

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.

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 a few responses that were written entirely in block capitals which restricts the mark that can be awarded for spelling, punctuation and grammar.

Common spelling errors on this task included 'collage', 'preperation' and 'alot' as well as confusion with homophones such as 'there' and 'their'.

Task 2

This task required learners to make suggestions for a local transport plan, based on travel issues in their area. The prompt material suggested some areas of concern and candidates were able to use their experience to add to these. It was clear that public transport, parking, cycle lanes and the condition of the roads are issues in many parts of the country.

Stronger candidates were able to develop their ideas logically and produce a clearly structured piece of writing. These candidates also developed their ideas in some detail, providing examples to back up their points and often making practical suggestions about the improvements they would like to see.

Weaker responses were those where candidates struggled to express or develop their opinions clearly. These responses sometimes became repetitious and contradictory. Other candidates just repeated ideas from the source material and added very little material of their own. Some responses became 'rant-like in style as the candidates were clearly very angry about transport in their area.

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. Common misspellings on this task included 'expenche' and 'rember'.

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.

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 to 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 articles, verb subject agreement 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.

Centres are also advised to encourage candidates to check their work as they are writing to ensure that their language is accurate. 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.

Finally, candidates should be encouraged to plan and structure their work carefully. On this paper some candidates wrote very long, but poorly structured responses. A clearly written, concise response will get a better mark for form, communication and purpose than a very long response which is difficult to follow. The two pages of answer space provided should be sufficient for the vast majority of candidates.

Pass mark for E203 in November2017

Maximum mark	30
Pass mark	18
UMS mark	6



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