

OCR Report to Centres

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This report on the Examination provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding of the specification content, of the operation of the scheme of assessment and of the application of assessment criteria.

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Functional Skills English Level 1 (09498)

Reading

Report on the work of the candidates

The context of the assessment appeared to be interesting and relevant to candidates. The majority of candidates attempted all questions.

Guidance for Centres

1R1 (Identify main points and ideas, and how they are presented) The majority of candidates were able to identify the main points and ideas presented in the source documents but less able candidates struggled to identify and express *how* the ideas were presented.

1R2 (Read and understand in detail) Most candidates were able to read and understand the gist of the texts. However, many struggled to really come to grips with detail. For example, candidates would often give an overall statement either unsupported by examples or give only one example when two or more were required.

1R3 (Use information) Most candidates used information from the texts as the basis of their answers. However, less able candidates used information from their imagination or previous experience to respond to questions. Sometimes candidates did not use sufficient information to fully meet the purpose of the question.

1R4 (Identify suitable responses) On the whole, candidates identified appropriate responses but they often lacked detail. For example, candidates indicated that an e-mail was required but failed to indicate who the email was to or give an email address. Therefore the response was not really functional.

Centres should prepare candidates thoroughly and use the Functional English Criteria to make candidates aware of the requirements of Level 1 Reading. Candidates should be encouraged to:

- take the time to read and understand what the question is asking them
- plan how much time they spend on each question - this would be likely to result in higher marks. Candidates should give themselves time for all questions to be answered.
- check whether or not there are two parts to a question and to answer each part separately, recognising when they are being asked for a specific number of points or examples
- use information from the correct source document
- respond appropriately to each question, using their own words where appropriate
- avoid giving unnecessary detail, but to check the number of marks available and use this as a guide to the length of answer
- understand that the question about contacting someone or a company for information is asking for the actual postal or email address etc. as specified in the source document rather than simply 'to call' or 'to write'

- understand what is meant by “layout features” and how these differ from language being used to convey a message. Candidates should be able to explain the effect of each individual feature/method identified

Centres and candidates should be aware that there are no marks for spelling, punctuation or grammar in the Reading assessment. Candidates should not spend time proof reading at the expense of answering all questions. Candidates should be reminded that they do not need to write in proper sentences when answering questions.

Centres are also reminded that:

- candidates should write their answers in the Reading answer booklet provided (or attach a word processed response to the booklet). Candidates should not write their answers in the Reading Task Booklet or the Resource Booklet.
- It is not helpful for centres to put one candidate answer booklet inside another or to put a candidate answer booklet inside the resource or task booklet. It is also unhelpful for the resource and task booklets to be placed inside the candidate answer booklet.
- scripts should be returned to the examiner immediately after the end of the test or at the latest at the end of the test window. It is not helpful if scripts are returned later.
- centre and candidate details should be completed accurately on the front of the answer booklet and they should tally with information provided on Interchange.

Writing

Report on the work of the candidates

The source documents and tasks set were in line with previous assessment. Candidates seemed to find the assessment and the scenarios generally accessible and almost all attempted both tasks with many good responses. Some candidates were confused about the purpose of Task B (some responses resembled advertisements). A significant number of candidates included plans and draft documents. There were few examples of text lifted from the stimulus material.

Guidance for Centres

1W1 (Content) The majority of responses were clear and coherent but with varying levels of detail particularly in Task B where a significant number omitted the name of their choice or the bad points.

1W2 (Spelling) Spelling was reasonably accurate in the majority of answers with many candidates scoring high marks. The most common errors were various interpretations of 'writing' and the spelling of words in the stimulus material including 'apartment' and 'restaurant'. Homophones proved a challenge to many candidates.

1W3 (Punctuation) Use of punctuation was reasonably successful. Most candidates used capital letters at the beginning of sentences and full stops at the end. Use of capital letters for proper nouns was less successful (including proper nouns in the task scenarios) the use of 'i' for 'I' was extensive. There were many examples of mixed upper/lower case or the use of upper case only. Question marks were often omitted or not used correctly, or followed by a full stop. Comma splicing was often evident.

1W4 (Grammar) On the whole, grammar was used reasonably accurately, only rarely interfering with the communication of meaning. The most common errors were a lack of subject/verb agreement and unusual syntax. Other frequent errors included missing words out and using a mix of tenses.

1W5 (Format) Attempts to format documents varied enormously from centre to centre. A clear pattern continues to indicate where centres have prepared candidates to write a range of formats. Most candidates achieved high marks for the letter format but a significant number omitted a heading for the article.

1W6 (Structure) Most candidates were able to produce both documents with a beginning, middle and end, using the scaffolding provided, although the 'flow' in the middle sometimes lacked coherence. Tone was usually appropriate but occasionally too 'chatty' in Task B. Some articles were extremely brief, perhaps due to running out of time.

Centres should prepare candidates thoroughly and use the Functional English Criteria to make candidates aware of the requirements of Level 1 Writing.

- Candidates should be encouraged to read the guidance provided for writing tasks and use the scaffolding provided, before attempting to write documents.
- Candidates should plan how much time they spend on each question.

- Centres and candidates should be aware that there are no marks for submitting plans or drafts of documents. Therefore, candidates should not waste their time copying the document out twice.
- Candidates should give themselves time for proof-reading and corrections to ensure their spelling, grammar and punctuation are accurate and they should be taught techniques to avoid these basic errors. In particular, all centres should teach candidates to use upper case for the personal pronoun, use consistent accurate upper/lower case and copy words accurately from the stimulus material. Candidates should be made aware of problems with homophones.
- Centres should ensure that candidates are aware of appropriate format for different types of document, such as reports, letters, articles and emails.

Functional Skills English Level 2 (09499)

Reading

Report on the work of the candidates

Most candidates were able to complete the Reading paper in the time allocated and appeared to understand most of the topic and contents of the source documents.

Guidance for Centres

Centres should prepare candidates thoroughly and use the Functional English Criteria to make candidates aware of the requirements of Level 2 Reading.

Candidates should be encouraged to:

- Read the questions carefully and answer all parts.
- Check they are commenting on the correct source documents.
- Be aware of mark allocation when determining how much to write, particularly in question 1 which does not require justification.
- Be aware that great length is not required. Instead, succinct, precise responses with specific examples should be given.
- Look at terms used in the questions to understand the difference between questions which seek comment on content and those which require comment on style or techniques.
- To practise identifying points of contrast and similarity and give clear explanations.
- Recognise persuasive techniques and be able to comment on their effects in the context of the documents.

Writing

Report on the work of the candidates

The stimulus documents and tasks set were appropriate for the level and the two topics appeared accessible and of interest to the majority of candidates. There was little difference between how candidates performed on each task, although the requirement of a formal letter for Task B caused a problem of finishing for some candidates.

Guidance for Centres

2W1 (Content) The majority of responses were effectively organised into paragraphs. Many candidates used information from personal experience as well as information from the source documents in their responses.

2W2 (Spelling) Spelling was quite good in the majority of answers with many candidates scoring high marks. Common errors were 'payed', 'benifit', 'greatful', 'alot', 'oppurtunity' and 'opion' (for opinion). Errors in homophones included 'fair/fare', 'there/their/they're', 'to/too' and 'quite/quiet'.

2W3 (Punctuation) Use of punctuation was generally sound for demarcation of sentences. However, a large number showed a tendency to comma splice and struggled with complex sentences. There were quite a few cases of candidates using lower case 'i' for the personal pronoun. The correct use of apostrophes, especially to indicate possession, was poor.

2W4 (Grammar) On the whole, grammar was used reasonably accurately, only rarely interfering with the communication of meaning. The most common errors amongst less able candidates were a lack of subject/verb agreement, misuse of conditional tenses and poor syntax.

2W5 (Format) Very few candidates achieved full marks for format. This was particularly true of the newspaper article for Task A where many failed to provide even a heading. The formatting of the letter for Task B was dependent on which centre the candidates were from – some had obviously been taught conventions, others clearly had not.

2W6 (Style & Tone) Many candidates adopted an acceptable tone in both tasks although Task A was often a rant against the organisation in question.

Centres should prepare candidates thoroughly and use the Functional English Criteria to make candidates aware of the requirements of Level 2 Writing.

- Candidates should be encouraged to respond appropriately to the scenario set and fully understand the task before commencing their responses.
- Candidates should give themselves time for proof-reading and corrections to ensure their spelling, grammar and punctuation are as accurate as possible. In particular, they should be able to use commas and apostrophes, for both omission and possession, accurately at this level.
- Candidates need to be aware of the formality necessary in most documents they are asked to write.
- Centres should ensure that candidates are aware of appropriate format for different types of document, such as articles, formal letters, formal reports, leaflets and emails.

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