

Functional Skills

English

Level 1 – **09498 (Unit 1 only)**

OCR Report to Centres August 2015

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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.

Reports should be read in conjunction with the published question papers and mark schemes for the examination.

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Overview

The Functional Skills English Writing assessment at Level 1 consists of one 50 minutes test, which focuses on the coverage and range as outlined in the Standards. Candidates are expected to write two documents within this time and are expected to demonstrate ‘functionality’ in terms of content, accuracy of spelling, punctuation and grammar, format and structure.

The Functional Skills English Writing assessment is one of three to be completed by candidates in order to gain the qualification at Level 1. The other assessments are for Reading, and Speaking and Listening.

General Comments

The stimulus material and tasks appear to engage candidates. The vast majority of candidates attempt both tasks.

Comments on Individual Units

There has been no change to candidate performance from last year. The following summarises candidate performance against each of the coverage/range statements in the Standards.

1W1 (Content)

The majority of responses were clear and coherent but with varying levels of detail. Most responses followed the suggested content supplied by the tasks given. More able candidates developed ideas effectively, with some writing above the Level 1 standard. A few, weaker, candidates copied the text given in the task and stimulus material without amending it to suit the purpose of the task.

1W2 (Spelling)

Spelling was quite good in the majority of answers with many candidates scoring high marks. However, ‘writting’ (for ‘writing’) was still a very common error. Candidates often made errors in spelling words which were present in the task or stimulus material. Errors in the spelling of homophones also remained very common, particularly, “there/their”, “witch /which”, “hole / whole”, “lose/loose”, “to/too” and “you’re/your”. There was also much confusion over the correct use of “of” and “off”. Some candidates continued to conflate words eg “alot”, “aswell”, “gonna” and “wonna”.

1W3 (Punctuation)

Use of punctuation was variable. Most candidates used capital letters at the beginning of sentences and full stops at the end, although some candidates used commas where they should have ended a sentence. Use of capital letters for proper nouns was less successful and the use of ‘i’ for ‘I’ was pervasive. There was also the random use of capital letters at the beginning, or in the middle, of words. Question marks were sometimes omitted, not used correctly, or followed by a full stop. Some candidates wrote their entire response in capital letters which meant that they could not access full marks for this skill area.

1W4 (Grammar)

On the whole, grammar was reasonably accurate, only rarely interfering with the communication of meaning. The most common errors were a lack of subject/verb agreement, inconsistency of tense, unusual syntax (word order) or the omission of definite and indefinite articles ('a' and 'the'). There were also many instances of 'should of' or 'could of' and the use of slang terms, inappropriate for formal writing.

1W5 (Format)

Attempts to format the document and accuracy in using the formats required, varied from centre to centre. There was a clear pattern emerging of centres in which candidates had been well prepared when it came to laying out a document correctly and most gained full or almost full marks. In other centres, candidates were unsure how to format documents e.g. formal letters, reports, articles or emails and in such centres the majority of candidates scored no marks.

1W6 (Structure)

The majority of candidates took note of the scaffolding in the question paper and sequenced their responses accordingly. Such candidates were able to produce documents with a beginning, middle and end, although the 'flow' in the middle could sometimes have been improved. Occasionally there was an inappropriate tone to the documents, perhaps by being overly familiar. Some documents were extremely brief, perhaps due to running out of time.

Advice to Centres

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 taught to respond appropriately to each task, use their own words, taking note of the scaffolding in the question
- give themselves time for proof-reading and corrections, ensuring their spelling, grammar and punctuation are accurate. 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 and the correct spelling of the word "writing"
- be reminded that if they are word processing responses, 'typos' will be treated as errors and thus it is still important for them to proof read and correct their work
- be aware of, and use, the appropriate format for different types of document. For example
 - a letter should include sender and recipient addresses, date, salutation and matching complimentary close
 - an article should include a heading, strapline, attribution, sub-headings where appropriate and paragraphs
 - an email should include to, from, subject and date
 - a leaflet should include a heading, sub-headings, bullet points where appropriate and paragraphs
 - a report should include a heading, sub-headings, numbered sections where appropriate and paragraphs
- be aware that there are no marks for submitting plans or drafts of documents, or drawings/images. Therefore, they should not waste their time including these.

Following the Ofqual thematic review of Functional English at Level L2 in the autumn of 2014, the assessments for Level 1 were also reviewed and minor changes made to maximise clarity and functionality.

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