

Functional Skills

English

Entry Level – 09495, 09496, 09497 (Unit 1, 2 and 3)

OCR Report to Centres August 2016

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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.

OCR will not enter into any discussion or correspondence in connection with this report.

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Functional Skills English Entry Level 1-3 (Unit 1, 2 and 3)

1 Overview

Functional Skills English Entry Level qualifications are available at Entry Level 1, Entry Level 2 and Entry Level 3. OCR accredits candidates with spikey profiles, who achieve units at different levels.

The qualifications are suitable for a wide range of candidates, of all ages, including those:

- in schools/colleges
- moving towards employment
- taking traineeships
- taking ESOL qualifications
- in secure establishments
- with special educational needs.

The moderation process has identified elements of best practice. This has included the submission of:

- detailed Speaking, Listening and Communication (SLC) *Assessor Observation Records* that provide examples of what individual candidates said or carried out during the exchange or discussion
- assessment tasks that demonstrated exactly how each Assessment Criteria (AC) was met
- SLC supporting evidence, e.g. notes taken by candidates during the assessment tasks
- good candidate responses to the reading tasks, alongside accurately completed assessment records
- detailed candidate responses to the writing tasks, where all overarching AC was met
- writing tasks that were accurately marked on the writing assessment record.

2 General Comments

Entry 1

The performance at this level has been very good. The vast majority of the SLC/writing assessment tasks undertaken have generally not varied from the live assessments. However, where the topics were contextualised, they were appropriate to the learners' level of ability. The OCR set reading tasks generated good candidate responses, as did the SLC and writing tasks, which indicates sound teaching and learning in Centres.

Entry 2

Candidates were well-prepared to achieve more complex AC, such as E2.S.3 - 'Express simply feelings or opinions and understand those expressed by others'. Centres were slightly more confident in contextualising the SLC and writing assessments to suit the candidates' interests at this level. The candidates' performance has been good in all three units.

Entry 3

The external moderation process identified a good variation of topics used to enthuse and motivate candidates for the SLC assessment tasks. Topics included: 'Should drugs be legalised?', 'Organising an enterprise event', 'How to stay fit and healthy' etc. The candidates' performance has been good in the SLC and reading units. The writing units were, in the main, responded to well by candidates, with the majority of candidates being awarded a pass.

However, where units were withdrawn, this was due to the failure of candidates to meet the overarching AC. The overarching criterion is as follows:

- Write at least four sentences and use at least two conjunctions in BOTH Task A and Task B.
- Achieve a positive mark for each evidence statement in BOTH Task A and Task B.
- Achieve the pass mark of 18/36.

Centres are encouraged to be vigilant with this criterion to ensure that candidates' writing units are not withdrawn for not achieving this overarching AC.

3 Comments on Individual Units

The units have provided excellent opportunities for differentiation in teaching and learning. For example: In the SLC units, at Entry Level 1 (AC E1.S.1) candidates must demonstrate that they can 'Understand the main points of short explanations' and at Entry Level 2 (AC E2.S.1) they must show they can 'Identify the main points of short explanations and instructions'. This is a theme that runs throughout the units. Centres engaging in best practice have clearly made good use of this feature in their delivery.

Unit 1 - Speaking, Listening and Communication

The 2016 revised SLC Assessor Observation Records have served to improve the quality of assessor observation evidence. Some very good examples of what the candidates said during the SLC assessment tasks demonstrated well how they had met the AC. For example, EL3 AC E3.S.2 states 'Use techniques to clarify and confirm understanding' and assessors wrote comments such as, 'XXXXX nodded her head to show that she understood what was being said and used phrases such as, 'Really?', 'I see', 'Wow!' and 'Goodness me!'.'

Unit 2 - Reading

The OCR set reading assessments, which cannot be contextualised, have been developed to provide Centres with a variety of options to choose. This enables centre assessors to select the most suitable topics for their candidates. This has worked well, as the vast majority of candidates achieved well in this unit. The uncomplicated mark scheme meant that most assessors accurately marked the assessments.

Unit 2 - Writing

In the main, Centres have demonstrated a good understanding of what is required by the candidates to achieve this unit. However, there are a small number of cases where the overarching assessment requirements were not met, especially at E3, and the unit therefore, had to be withdrawn.

4 Sector Update

The current government has continued to focus on Functional Skills in English. The government believes the qualifications deliver the level of English skills that employers are looking for and that they help people into work and enable them to get on in life.

The government's commitment to Functional Skills in both maths and English has been demonstrated by its introduction of *The Functional Skills Reform Programme*. The objective of this reform is to develop and improve the qualifications by September 2018, so that they are rigorous, challenging and well-taught. The reform also aims to provide improved support for teachers of Functional Skills.

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