

Guidance for Delivery of Functional Skills English

Note:

These materials relate to the Functional Skills English assessments that will be in use from September 2015

This guide has been produced in order to help centres understand and prepare for the imminent changes to City & Guilds' Functional English assessment papers.

It is important to stress that the Functional Skills English standards have not changed; therefore, it is still essential to use the Adult Literacy Core Curriculum to underpin the teaching of Functional Skills English. It should inform all schemes of work, lesson plans, individual activities and learning tasks. The Functional Skills English standards were based on the Adult Literacy Core Curriculum.

As Functional Skills English is a summative exam, it should only be attempted by candidates once they have completed a period of learning and have successfully sat practice papers or centre-devised exercises that replicate the demands and rigours of the live examination materials.

Version and date	Change detail
1.1 January 2016	This guidance document has been updated to incorporate a Glossary of Literary Terms which can be found on pages 37 – 39.
1.2 February 2016	This guidance document has been updated to add a leaflet as a type of document covered in Level 1 which can be found on page 8.
1.3 February 2017	This guidance document has been updated to revise the Glossary of Literary Terms on pages 37 – 39 which has been changed to Glossary of Language Techniques / Features and can be found on pages 37 - 40.

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Summary of Changes to Reading Level 1

- The number of marks available against each assessment criterion has been altered to achieve a more even spread across the four criteria – see table below.

Skill standard	Coverage and range	Old allocation of marks	New allocation of marks	Number of questions
Read and understand a range of straightforward texts	1.2.1 Identify the main points and ideas and how they are presented in a variety of texts	8	12	15 questions (previously 18)
	1.2.2 Read and understand different texts in detail	17	13	
	1.2.3 Utilise information	10	10	
	1.2.4 Identify suitable responses to texts	5	5	
TOTAL		40	40	15

- Presented scenarios to be more formal.
- Non-formulaic approach to testing individual criteria. Wording of questions will differ from paper to paper, but format of questions will not be significantly different.
- More emphasis on candidates selecting and explaining responses, rather than simply retrieving information and listing answers.
- Typically, where multiple responses are required for one question, answers will be located throughout the document(s), rather than being found in one sentence or paragraph.
- Visually more realistic source documents.
- Larger variety of source documents.

A level 1 Reading paper will always:

- address all four assessment criteria
- consist of 15 questions
- present candidates with a realistic, work-related or formal scenario
- require a candidate to read two source documents in order to answer the 15 questions.
- have varied types of document, for example, an article and an extract from instruction manual
- vary the purposes of source documents, for example, to persuade, explain/discuss, request action or response, instruct, inform
- have an overall word count of between 800 and 1000 words
- have a balanced spread of questions across both the source texts
- have a minimum of 2 questions to test each assessment criterion.

Source documents

Types of source documents will include articles, web pages, letters, report extracts, instructions, emails, adverts, manuals, book extracts, information leaflets, marketing material, texts of speeches, display posters etc.

Assessment criteria

1.2.1 'Identify the main points and ideas and how they are presented in a variety of texts'

This requires recognition of main points, ideas and themes and the way in which information has been presented.

1.2.2 'Read and understand texts in detail'

This requires detailed reading to understand specific information and less apparent facts.

1.2.3 'Utilise information contained in texts'

The candidate must identify information that explains what actions are possible after having read the texts.

1.2.4 'Identify suitable responses to texts'

This requires the candidate to identify information in the texts that explains how to carry out the actions suggested.

Criteria	Explanation	Examples of functional questions
1.2.1 Identify the main points and ideas and how they are presented in a variety of texts	Skills candidates need to use in order to do this include skimming, scanning and reading in detail. This will include an understanding of the way in which information has been presented, either through layout features or choice of language.	<p>What is the main point the author is trying to get across?</p> <p>What are the subjects covered in the various parts of the text?</p> <p>How is the author clearly setting out the main points?</p> <p>What layout features are used to communicate the main points and ideas?</p> <p>How does the author attract the reader's attention to the main themes?</p> <p>How does the author convey the main points?</p> <p>What techniques does the author use to make the different points stand out?</p> <p>The main thrust / emphasis of this document is to encourage the reader to: a) b) etc</p>
1.2.2 Read and understand texts in detail	Detailed reading is expected, to understand the specific information presented and to capture necessary, but less apparent, facts, particulars and dates. There must be an awareness of the manner in which it is presented to suit the audience and topic.	<p>According to the witness, what were the causes of the accident?</p> <p>What details should be included in your presentation?</p> <p>How do the instructions differ for low platforms and high platforms?</p> <p>What are the final dates by which applications must be submitted?</p> <p>Which breeds of animal are you most likely to see in open fields?</p>
1.2.3 Utilise information	The candidate must identify information that explains what	What three items are you not allowed to take to the festival?

<p>contained in texts</p> <p>1.2.3 Utilise information contained in texts (continued)</p>	<p>actions are possible after having read the texts.</p> <p>The candidate must identify information that explains what actions are possible after having read the texts. (continued)</p>	<p>What formats can music be bought in?</p> <p>Who should you send a letter of complaint to?</p> <p>Who would be the most appropriate person to invite to speak at your conference?</p> <p>What steps would you take if you wanted to join the campaign?</p> <p>How can potential dangers of working at heights be guarded against?</p>
<p>1.2.4 Identify suitable responses to texts</p>	<p>The candidate must identify information in the texts that explains how to carry out the actions suggested.</p>	<p>In what format are you advised to submit your complaint?</p> <p>You want to buy an album, what would you click on? A) shop; B) album titles; C) blog; D) download</p> <p>How should you apply for a grant to pay for the equipment?</p> <p>Which two pieces of information are essential when buying tickets for the concert?</p>

These examples are by no means exhaustive and it is important that centres realise questions will vary across papers.

Common reasons for losing marks:

- Lack of adequate preparation before sitting exam.
- Lack of familiarity with the types of questions being asked before summative assessment.
- Unfamiliarity with common exam techniques. Candidates often lose marks through failing to provide sufficient responses to particular questions.
- Lack of awareness that the number of required responses is either asked for directly in the question or indirectly by the number of marks available for that particular question.
- Failing to read the questions properly.

- Repeating the stem of the question and/or writing in complete sentences, wasting valuable time.

Summary of changes to Level 1 Writing

- Tasks will be generally formal and/or work related.
- At least one question will have stimulus material in the form of an authentic document.
- Higher levels of accuracy in spelling, punctuation and grammar will be required to achieve a pass. It is very unlikely that a candidate will achieve sufficient marks to pass if zero marks are awarded for one of the three areas of spelling, punctuation and grammar.

A level 1 Writing paper will always:

- consist of 2 questions
- present candidates with at least one piece of stimulus material
- require candidates to write approximately 200-250 words per response
- require candidates to write different types of document
- require candidates to write for different audiences

Assessment advice for centres

All the advice below has been adapted from the Functional Skills English Chief Examiner reports, all of which can be found on the City & Guilds website.

1. Format and Structure

At level 1, candidates will be asked to write two of the following types of document: a formal letter; a formal email; an article; a leaflet; the text of a speech.

- A letter should include a sender's address, a recipient's address, the date, a salutation and the associated valediction of *Yours faithfully* or *Yours sincerely*.
- A formal email should include the recipient's email address, a subject line and appropriate salutation and close.
- An article should include a heading and, if appropriate, strap-lines, subheadings or any other feature suitable for the particular article.

- A leaflet should include a heading, clear sections or any other feature suitable for the particular leaflet.
- A speech should include an opening acknowledgment of the audience and evidence of bringing the speech to a close.

2. Inclusion of relevant detail

- Candidates should carefully read the assessment task and any associated stimulus material, which will allow them to determine what should realistically be included.
- Planning a response should allow the candidate to ensure all relevant detail will be covered.
- A candidate's contact details are often essential in a written piece, for instance when requesting a response to a letter or applying for a job.
- Candidates should aim to write between 200 and 250 words for each question.
- Candidates should strike the right balance between including sufficient detail and maintaining a concise writing style.

3. Language, logical sequence, clarity and coherence

- Candidates are judged on their use of language in terms of register (tone), the use of correct expressions and their abilities to write clearly, without ambiguity or confusion.
- Candidates lose marks due to clumsy, inaccurate or long-winded expressions and failing to maintain a logical sequence. Planning, drafting and proof-reading would be very beneficial.
- Candidates should ensure there is coherence within, and between, the points being made. Successive points should be linked with connective devices and language to show logical progression.

4. Spelling

- Performance in this category varies from very poor to excellent. Some words are frequently spelt incorrectly; these include *writing, believe, thank you, a lot, as well, manager, receive*, amongst others.
- Lower levels of Functional Skills English are subsumed into the level above; therefore, all accurate spellings deemed appropriate to Entry 3 and below should also be correctly spelt at level 1.

- Access to dictionaries, electronic grammar and spell checkers is encouraged.
- Responses can be word-processed for those candidates who have selected the paper-based route, and spell and grammar checking facilities can be turned on.
- Proof-reading of work is important.

5. Punctuation

- Correct punctuation (appropriate to the level) is always required, irrespective of the type of text being written.
- At level 1, candidates must demonstrate the correct use of upper and lower case letters, initial capital letters, full stops and question marks.
- Whilst most candidates start sentences with a capital letter, it is often the candidates who word-process their responses who miss this out.
- Some candidates have the mistaken belief that emails need not be punctuated correctly.
- Candidates often omit capital letters when writing proper nouns, especially on days of the week, months of the year, or in addresses and postcodes.
- The personal pronoun should always be capitalised.

6. Grammar

- Recurring errors include:

incorrect subject / verb agreement, verb / tense agreement

incorrect word order

the omission of definite and indefinite articles

inconsistency/incorrect use of tense

misuse of common homophones such as too/to, their/there/they're and your/you're

could of and should of

Sample Level 1 Writing Paper:

Question 1

You train at a local gym when it opens at 6am because you plan to run a local marathon to raise money for charity.

Three times in the last week the gym has not opened at 6am and you had to leave without using the gym.

Your task: is to write a letter to the gym manager about the recent problem.

The person to write to is Richard Smith at Fun Fitness, Minerva Way, Elmswell, EL5 2SR.


Expand on these points:

- how it has affected your time, money and fitness
- poor customer service
- reputation of the gym
- suggesting ways the manager could prevent the problem in the future.

(25 marks)

We suggest you write about 200-250 words.

Question 2

	From	richard.smith@funfitness.org
	To	member100182@bthotmail.com
	Subject	Complaint

Dear Member

Thank you for your letter. We are sorry that we have not managed to open the gym at the published time, preventing you from training for the marathon. We pride ourselves in offering a fantastic facility that allows those who wish to train at 6am to do so. We will ensure our facilities are fully accessible in the future.

As a way of apology, for every pound you raise running the marathon, the gym will donate 50 pence for your chosen charity.

Yours sincerely
Richard Smith

Your task: is to write an email to your work colleagues using the above response and the points below.

The email address to write to is: allcolleagues@workplace.com.

- details of the marathon
- details of the gym's offer
- the charity and why it is important to you
- encouraging people to sponsor you.

(25 marks)

Suggested word count 200-250 words.

Summary of changes to Reading Level 2

- The number of marks available against each assessment criterion has been altered to achieve a more even spread across the five criteria – see table below.

Skill standard	Coverage and range	Old allocation of marks	New allocation of marks	Number of questions
Select, read, understand and compare texts and use them to gather information, ideas, arguments and opinions	2.2.1 Select and use different types of texts to obtain and utilise relevant information	8	6	12 questions (previously 15)
	2.2.2 Read and summarise, succinctly, information/ideas from different sources	8	8	
	2.2.3 (a) Identify the purposes of texts and (b) comment on how meaning is conveyed through language and layout NB emphasis should be on language rather than layout	2 8	2 8	
	2.2.4 Detect point of view, implicit meaning and/or bias	7	8	
	2.2.5 Analyse texts in relation to audience needs and consider suitable responses where applicable	7	8	
TOTAL		40	40	12

- Non-formulaic approach to testing individual criteria. Wording of questions will differ from paper to paper.

- Assessment criterion 2.2.3 tests a candidate's ability to comment on how meaning is conveyed: there will be more emphasis on use of language rather than layout features of a document.
- More emphasis on candidates selecting, explaining, comparing and contrasting documents, rather than simply retrieving information and listing answers.
- Candidates will be credited for process, as well as information.
- Visually more realistic source documents.

A level 2 Reading paper will always:

- address all five assessment criteria
- consist of 12 questions
- present candidates with a realistic, work-related scenario
- require a candidate to read a minimum of three source documents in order to answer the 12 questions. Occasionally, a fourth source document will be used.
- have varied types of document, for example, an article, a webpage and an advertisement
- have at least two source documents that have different purposes, for example, to persuade, explain/discuss, request action or response, instruct, inform
- have an overall word count of between 1200 and 1400 words
- have a balanced spread of questions across all the source texts
- have a minimum of 2 questions to test each assessment criterion.

Source documents

1. Types of source documents will include articles, web pages, letters, report extracts, instructions, emails, adverts, manuals, book extracts, information leaflets, marketing material, texts of speeches, display posters etc.
2. One source will provide opportunities for candidates to detect point of view, bias and/or implied meaning.

Assessment criteria

2.2.1 'Select and use different types of texts to obtain and utilise relevant information'

The candidate must identify the correct document from clues in the question. Questions will not explicitly lead candidates to the correct document, as selecting the correct one forms part of the assessment criterion.

2.2.2 'Summarise information and ideas from different sources'

The candidate will have to use at **least two** of the source documents to draw their summary from. Alternatively, the different sources may be within one document, such as a discussion forum page where there are several contributors.

2.2.3a 'Identifies the purpose of text'

The candidate must identify the differing purposes of various documents, for instance those giving facts, opinions, instruction etc.

2.2.3b 'Comment on how meaning is conveyed'

This refers to language techniques (and to a much lesser extent layout) employed by the author to enhance their communication with the intended audience. Not every paper will test layout techniques.

2.2.4 'Detect point of view, implicit meaning and/or bias'

The candidate must identify inference, bias, points of view, opinion and fact, interpret idioms in context, for example.

2.2.5 'Analyse texts in relation to audience needs and consider suitable responses, where applicable'

The candidate must analyse texts in order to identify how a text has been written for a specific audience, to compare and contrast opinions, or to extract information that is not explicitly written, for example.

The table below provides example questions that may be used to test each assessment criterion.

Criteria	Explanation	Examples of functional questions
2.2.1 Select and use different types of texts to obtain and utilise relevant information	Candidates identify which document information comes from based on clues in the question and the type of document. For example, an unbiased opinion would come from a review rather than the manufacturer's promotional information.	<p>According to the journalist, what are four arguments that could be used to prove your case?</p> <p>What are the instructions provided regarding attending the protest?</p> <p><i>Remember, questions will not explicitly lead candidates to the correct document, as selecting the correct one forms part of the assessment criterion.</i></p>
2.2.2 Read and summarise, succinctly, information/ideas from different sources	The candidate will be asked to summarise briefly; we do not expect lengthy responses as this is assessing reading skills.	<p>Compare the authors' opinions in documents 1 and 2 about the importance of contracts.</p> <p>Write a short paragraph summarising the different points of view in documents 1 and 3.</p> <p>Summarise the benefits of healthy eating using documents 1 and 2, clarifying the main differences.</p> <p><i>NB: if a candidate is asked to use two separate documents, it will not be possible for the candidate to use only one document to achieve the full marks;</i></p>

<p>2.2.3a Identify the purposes of texts...</p>	<p>This may or may not be a multiple choice question.</p>	<p>Identify the purpose of Document 2 and provide one reason from the text to support your answer.</p> <p>OR</p> <p>Which of the following best describes the purpose of document 2?</p> <p>To:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) review b) promote c) instruct d) critique.
<p>2.2.3b ...and comment on how meaning is conveyed through language and layout</p>	<p>This will usually focus on literary devices or language techniques used by the author to enhance the effectiveness of the document and its relevance to its intended audience, as opposed to layout features of a document, although this will also be tested at times.</p>	<p>What characteristics show that this document is an article?</p> <p>Or</p> <p>Document 2 uses some or all of the following techniques:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bias Similes Metaphors Idioms Clichés* <p>Identify two techniques from the above list that have been used in the text and explain how they help to convey meaning.</p> <p><i>* See Adult Literacy Core Curriculum for other possible literary devices / techniques</i></p>
<p>2.2.4 Detect point of view, implicit meaning and/or bias</p>	<p>At least one source document will contain implicit meaning and/or bias.</p>	<p>Which of the following best sums up the author's point of view:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) pro b) against c) un-decided d) independent

<p>2.2.4 Detect point of view, implicit meaning and/or bias (continued)</p>	<p>At least one source document will contain implicit meaning and/or bias (continued).</p>	<p>Or</p> <p>What is meant by the phrase ‘one good turn deserves another’?</p> <p>Or</p> <p>Identify five examples of opinion presented as fact from Document 4.</p> <p>Or</p> <p>Provide examples of biased phrases used in the document.</p> <p>Or</p> <p>What indications are there that the author has a biased viewpoint?</p>
<p>2.2.5 Analyse texts in relation to audience needs and consider suitable responses, where applicable</p>	<p>Questions will require candidates to go beyond merely extracting information from a document; they will have to analyse a text, either in content or form.</p>	<p>In replying to the complaint letter received (Document 1), which four policy statements from Document 2 are applicable?</p> <p>Or</p> <p>What are two implications of having an alternative fuel supply? Support your answers with evidence from the text.</p> <p>Or</p> <p>Identify two ways the author is using language to persuade people to apply for the position. Support your answers with quotes from the text.</p>

These examples are by no means exhaustive and it is important that centres realise questions will vary across papers.

How questions may look from September 2015:

- 6 Document 2 uses some or all of the following techniques:
- Clichés
 - Humour
 - Alliteration
 - Rhetorical question
 - Colloquial expressions

4 marks

Identify and give examples of **two** of these techniques being used in the text and explain how they help to convey meaning.

First chosen technique and example from text

.....
.....

Explanation of technique

.....
.....

Second chosen technique and example from text

.....
.....

Explanation of technique

.....
.....

8 Identify **two** ways the author is using language to persuade people to apply for the position. Support your answers with quotes from the text.

4 marks

.....

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Common reasons for losing marks:

- Lack of adequate preparation before sitting exam.
- Not understanding level 2 concepts, such as biased writing, implicit meaning and specific devices used to enhance communication or convey meaning.
- Lack of familiarity with the types of questions being asked before summative assessment.
- Unfamiliarity with common exam techniques. Candidates often lose marks through failing to provide sufficient responses to particular questions.
- Lack of awareness that the number of required responses is either asked for directly in the question or indirectly by the number of marks available for that particular question.
- Failing to read the questions properly.
- Repeating the stem of the question and/or writing in complete sentences, wasting valuable time.

Summary of changes to Level 2 Writing

- At least one question will have stimulus material in the form of an authentic document.
- Neither question will have a list of bullet points telling candidates what detail to include; instead, candidates will have to deduce the relevant detail to be included from the task instruction and/or stimulus material provided. See example questions and stimulus material below.
- Higher levels of accuracy in spelling, punctuation and grammar will be required to achieve a pass. It is very unlikely that a candidate will achieve sufficient marks to pass if zero marks are awarded for one of the three areas of spelling, punctuation and grammar.

A level 2 Writing paper will always:

- consist of 2 questions
- present candidates with at least one piece of stimulus material
- require candidates to write approximately 250-300 words per response
- require a candidate to use persuasive writing in at least one of the responses
- require candidates to write different types of document
- require candidates to write for different audiences

Assessment advice for centres

All the advice below has been adapted from the Functional Skills English Chief Examiner reports, all of which can be found on the City & Guilds website.

1. Format and Structure

At level 2, candidates will be asked to write two of the following types of document: a formal letter; a formal email; a report; an article; the text of a speech.

- A letter should include a sender's address, a recipient's address, the date, a salutation and the associated valediction of *Yours faithfully* or *Yours sincerely*.
- A formal email should include the recipient's email address, a subject line and appropriate salutation and close.
- An article should include a heading and, if appropriate, strap-lines, subheadings or any other feature suitable for the particular article.
- A report should include a heading and subheadings and can include additional features such as bullet points and numbered points, for instance.
- A speech should include an opening acknowledgment of the audience and evidence of bringing the speech to a close.

2. Inclusion of relevant detail

- Candidates should carefully read the assessment task and any associated stimulus material, which will allow them to determine what should realistically be included.
- Planning a response should allow the candidate to ensure all relevant detail will be covered.
- A candidate's contact details are often essential in a written piece, for instance when requesting a response to a letter or applying for a job.
- Candidates should aim to write between 250 and 300 words for each question.
- Candidates should strike the right balance between including sufficient detail and maintaining a concise writing style.

3. Language, logical sequence and concise expression

- Candidates are judged on their use of language in terms of register (tone), the use of correct expressions and their abilities to write concisely in a logical sequence.
- Candidates lose marks due to clumsy, inaccurate or long-winded expressions and failing to maintain a logical sequence. Planning, drafting and proof-reading would be very beneficial.
- Candidates are required to demonstrate the use of paragraphs, which should help candidates maintain a logical sequence.

4. Persuasive writing

- At level 2, one of the tasks requires the candidates to write persuasively.
- Markers are instructed to look for specific techniques of persuasive writing such as repetition, emotive language, reasoned argument, rhetorical questions or appealing directly to the reader through the use of direct address, amongst others.
- The majority of candidates receive at least one of the two marks available for this, but it is evident that some candidates are not familiar with persuasive techniques.

5. Spelling

- Performance in this category varies from very poor to excellent. Some words are frequently spelt incorrectly; these include *writing, believe, thank you, a lot, as well, manager, receive*, amongst others.
- Lower levels of Functional Skills English are subsumed into the level above; therefore, all accurate spellings deemed appropriate to level 1 should also be correctly spelt at level 2.
- More complex words deemed appropriate to level 2 should be used and spelt correctly.
- Access to dictionaries, electronic grammar and spell checkers is encouraged.
- Responses can be word-processed for those candidates who have selected the paper-based route, and spell and grammar checking facilities can be turned on.
- Proof-reading of work is important.

6. Punctuation

- Correct punctuation (appropriate to the level) is always required, irrespective of the type of text being written.
- At level 2, candidates must demonstrate the correct use of upper and lower case letters, initial capital letters, full stops, question marks, commas, apostrophes and inverted commas.
- Whilst most candidates start sentences with a capital letter, it is often the candidates who word-process their responses who miss this out.
- Some candidates have the mistaken belief that emails need not be punctuated correctly.

- The greatest cause of lost marks is the misuse or absence of commas and apostrophes.
- Candidates often omit capital letters when writing proper nouns, especially on days of the week, months of the year, or in addresses and postcodes.
- The personal pronoun should always be capitalised.

7. Grammar

- Recurring errors include:
 - incorrect subject / verb agreement, verb / tense agreement
 - incorrect word order
 - the omission of definite and indefinite articles
 - inconsistency/incorrect use of tense
 - misuse of common homophones such as too/to, their/there/they're and your/you're
 - could of* and *should of*

Sample Level 2 Writing Paper:

Question 1

Wanted..... Fun loving festival fans to work for the weekend at the Amerleigh Family Festival

Amerleigh Family Festival is a popular and critically acclaimed music festival providing entertainment for the whole family. In addition to the main stages, there will be smaller fringe stages and workshops for all age groups and musical tastes.

We are looking for people to work in a number of different roles. We need security stewards, childcare workers for the children's tent, bar and waiting staff for the catering areas, cleaners and litter pickers.

On top of the competitive hourly rate we offer, you will also get accommodation and all meals, and most importantly, you can access any of the music or entertainment areas during your breaks.

If you are prepared to work hard and are available from the 20th to 22nd August, then apply in writing telling us about yourself, explaining why you are suitable for a particular role, and any relevant experience you have had. Persuade us to employ you!

Please write to John James, Festival Organiser, Amerleigh House, Amerleigh AM3 32Y

Your task: is to write a letter of application in response to the advertisement above.

(26 marks)

Suggested word count 250 – 300 words.

You will be assessed on:

- presenting information/ideas concisely, logically and persuasively
- using a range of sentence structures, including complex sentences and paragraphs to organise written communication effectively
- structuring and formatting information appropriately
- punctuating text accurately, including the use of commas, apostrophes and inverted commas where required
- ensuring writing is fit for purpose and audience, with accurate spelling and grammar that support clear meaning.

Question 2

You worked at the festival in your chosen role and really enjoyed the experience. The festival organiser has asked you to write an article for their website to help encourage people to apply to work at next year's festival. She is keen for you to advertise the fun elements and benefits of working at the festival.

Your task: is to write an article for the festival's website.

(24 marks)

You will be assessed on:

- presenting information clearly and concisely
- using an appropriate writing style
- using a range of sentence structures, including complex sentences and paragraphs to organise written communication effectively
- punctuating text accurately, including the use of commas, apostrophes and inverted commas where required
- ensuring writing is fit for purpose and audience, with accurate spelling and grammar that supports clear meaning.

Suggested word count 250 – 300 words.

Support Materials

Ofqual report: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/improving-functional-skills-qualifications>

Adult Literacy Core Curriculum

Functional Skills English Standards

City & Guilds website:

1. Chief Examiner reports
2. Worked examples
3. Practice papers

City & Guilds Smartscreen

Sample teaching and learning activities

Functional Skills English Level 1 – Reading

Identify the main points and ideas and how they are presented in a variety of texts

1. As a group, read several types of text and make notes and/or discuss various techniques employed by the writers that help establish what the main points are, and how they are presented, within each text.
2. Integrate reading and writing activities by asking group or individuals to compose various types of text with one or more main messages, suitable to particular audiences.
3. Present a group with unformatted text and discuss ways in which layout could be altered to make the text suitable for different audiences or purposes.
4. Discuss what layout features can be used in order to convey main messages to an intended audience.
5. Discuss how a combination of language and layout features can be used to enhance communication of main messages.

Read and understand text in detail

1. Read a review of a particular product and list positive and negative qualities of the product.
2. Use a document in which it is essential to read all the text, eg, instructions how to mix mortar, and ask learners to explain the process to the group.
3. Have a variety of texts to hand and discuss which texts require skimming, scanning or detailed reading.
4. Use an insurance claim report (or similar) and ask group to assume either the role of claimant or the company disputing the claim. Based on the detail in the report, ask the group to argue relative positions for and against the claim.

Utilise information contained in texts

1. Ask learners to read a text and to then use the information in the text to create a brief verbal argument as to why a particular (course of) action should be undertaken. For instance, the text could be a holiday brochure about two different resorts, two different job descriptions or a fundraising leaflet from a charity.
2. Ask learners to follow a set of instructions.
3. Ask group to discuss what actions could be taken after reading a protest leaflet, or a leaflet intended to persuade the audience to a particular action.
4. Use an instructional text on how to format different types of documents, or how to write an effective speech, and ask group to complete the tasks.

Identify suitable responses to texts

1. Ask a learner to read a complaint letter and a second document with three different responses. Ask learners to discuss which response is suitable and the reasons why.
2. Ask learners to compose suitable responses to a variety of texts. For instance, a letter of complaint or a letter about a particular issue sent to a newspaper.
3. Use both a complaint letter and a corresponding set of policies and procedures, and discuss which policies and procedures should be used to create an adequate response.

Sample teaching and learning activities

Functional Skills English Level 1 - Writing

Write clearly and coherently, including an appropriate level of detail

1. Discuss various written pieces with a view to understanding the differing amounts of required detail in each piece. Go on to discuss how the coherence of a text impacts upon essential and superfluous detail.
2. Analyse two sets of instructions; one poor and one well written. Discuss the need for clarity and level of detail. Then ask learners to write their own set of instructions and pass to another learner to follow. Can they follow them completely?
3. Present a learner or group with a sequential scenario and discuss how to relate the events through coherent writing, using discourse markers, reference to earlier parts, ellipses and the use of other linguistic devices to ensure the texts 'hangs together'.
4. Take a coherent piece of writing and ask the group to remove all the elements that connect the various sentences and give the piece cohesion. Compare the two pieces of writing and discuss their effectiveness.

Present information in a logical sequence

1. Take a well written text and separate and mix up the various sections and/or paragraphs. Ask learners to rearrange the sections into a logical order and discuss the impact of poor ordering on logicality and coherence.
2. Ask a learner to relate a complaint they have and ask another learner to plan and draft a complaint letter on their behalf. The draft letter needs to follow the conventions of signalling to the reader the forthcoming content, of presenting the details in a logical, coherent order and concluding in a suitable manner.
3. Identify an event about which a news article will be written. Discuss the order in which the details should be written. Discuss the impact of altering the order.
4. Write a speech or presentation to persuade people to vote for a particular motion, for instance, and discuss the conventions of writing and the ordering of ideas. Include conventional openings, brief outlines of content to come, details and signalling of close of speech or presentation.

Use language, format and structure suitable for purpose and audience

1. Discuss the details of an article or story and ask learners to re-write the text for two different audiences.
2. Learners could act as broadcast journalists and re-tell the same story for an audience of teenagers and an audience of adults, similar to children's Newsround and the BBC Six O'clock News.

3. Ask candidates to compare the language, format and structure of a blog on the BBC News website compared to a blog on a more teenage conscious web site.
4. Discuss and practice the formatting of various documents according to the accepted conventions. Include formal letters, articles, speeches, emails, reports, promotional material, instructions, etc.

Use correct grammar, including correct and consistent use of tense

1. Ask learners to re-write texts in different tenses and discuss the implications this has for word selection, word order and overall sense and meaning.
2. Ask learners to proof read texts produced by other learners, themselves or tutors.
3. Produce a piece of text with tenses all mixed up and ask candidates to make sense of the writing by making the tense consistent.

Ensure written work includes generally accurate punctuation and spelling and that meaning is clear

1. Ask learners to write a paragraph devoid of any punctuation and then pass the paragraph to another learner to insert the correct punctuation. This should also highlight the possible ambiguities of meaning when a text is unpunctuated.
2. Produce a text containing common homophones or near homophones used incorrectly throughout. In groups, ask learners to discuss and correct the text.
3. Ensure learners are secure in their knowledge of when to use upper and lower case letters, full stops, initial capital letters and question marks.
4. Ensure learners appreciate the need for correct punctuation in all Functional Skills English tasks, including informal emails.

Sample teaching and learning activities

Functional Skills English Level 2 - Reading

Select and use different types of texts to obtain and utilise relevant information

1. Obtain several texts on a contentious subject, ideally from different viewpoints in regards to the subject, and ask learners to prepare and deliver a speech for a debate.
2. Utilise information within a complaint letter to compose a suitable reply.
3. Use both a complaint letter and a corresponding set of policies and procedures, and discuss which policies and procedures should be used to create an adequate response.
4. Obtain different texts about the same subject, written from different viewpoints, such as a product review compared to product promotional material, or newspaper reports about a protest written with opposing sides, and ask group to discuss the differences.

Read and summarise, succinctly, information/ideas from different sources

1. Obtain two different texts about a particular product and ask learners to summarise the positive and negative points, either in writing or in a discussion or presentation.
2. Ask learners to select texts relating to a contentious subject (e.g. film censorship, hunting, genetic engineering) and to summarise the arguments presented in the texts. The summary could be written or verbal.
3. Compare and contrast different texts' viewpoints about a particular subject.
4. Focus on ensuring explicit comparison between different viewpoints through using discourse markers such as 'on the one hand', 'in direct contrast', 'similarly', 'whereas', 'in summary', 'despite', 'however', etc.

Identify the purposes of texts and comment on how meaning is conveyed

1. As a group or individuals, select and read some persuasive texts (e.g. an advertising leaflet, a promotional brochure for a theme park, a blurb on a book cover). Discuss the authors' intentions and whether or not the authors have been successful in their persuasive intentions.
2. As a group or individuals, select various texts (e.g. newspaper articles, business reports, children's literature) and discuss the particular techniques each piece of writing contains that are an aid (or hindrance) to conveying the authors' intentions.
3. Use unformatted texts and ask different groups to re-write the texts for different audiences. Discuss the resulting differences in language and layout.

4. Obtain different types of texts and analyse how each has been written and formatted in order to address its particular audience(s).
5. Ask a group to write a newspaper article or a promotional leaflet for different age groups and discuss the differences.

Detect point of view, implicit meaning and/or bias

1. Obtain several texts written from a biased standpoint and ask learners to identify and discuss specific examples of bias within the writing.
2. Obtain at least two different articles about the same subject and discuss the ways in which each article presents the subject matter (e.g. two articles about a particular sporting event written by the local papers of the teams involved; a complimentary and a non-complimentary review or a film of other event).
3. Discuss the differences between objective fact and points of view and opinion. Discuss the characteristic of written argument. Ask learners to read texts and identify the facts on one hand, and the opinions on the other.
4. Obtain a neutral text and discuss ways to alter it to produce a biased text.

Analyse texts in relation to audience needs and consider suitable responses

1. Present learners with various complaint letters and ask them to read the letters in detail and then construct suitable responses.
2. Combine the complaint letters with copies of relevant policies and procedures and ask learners to identify the particular policies and procedures that would apply to the particular circumstance, making reference to both the complainant's points and the policies and procedures in their response.
3. Present candidates with various written responses to a particular task and ask them to discuss the appropriateness of each response. For example, a Manager could ask for a sales report and the learners could be presented with three or four summaries, only one of which is wholly appropriate.
4. Compare and contrast authors' ideas, looking for similarities and differences in opinion.
5. Identify the most common suggestion or complaint amongst contributors to a discussion forum.
6. Discuss how language in a text has been used in relation to its audience.

Sample teaching and learning activities

Functional Skills English Level 2 - Writing

Present information/ideas concisely, logically, and persuasively

1. Ask learners to consider and discuss the different texts that require persuasive writing. As a follow up, ask learners to write a persuasive text about a particular topic (e.g. an advertising leaflet, a letter soliciting funds, the text for a debate).
2. Ask learners to consider the order of information and detail within a text. Separate the various sections of a text and ask learners to put them in the correct order.
3. Discuss the impact of altering the sequence of a news report.
4. Ask learners to edit a text so it becomes concise.
5. Swap written texts and ask colleague to edit the text so it becomes more concise.
6. Take a four hundred word text and see if the word count can be reduced to three hundred without significant loss of detail.

Present information on complex subjects clearly and concisely

1. Ask learners to act as an Editor for a newspaper. They must then edit a piece of writing on a complex subject so that it is presented clearly and concisely. This can be repeated for a different audience.
2. Ask learners to write a speech for a debate about a complex subject, considering structure, tone, syntax, audience and detail required etc.
3. Present a learner or group with a sequential scenario and discuss how to relate the events through coherent writing, using discourse markers, reference to earlier parts, ellipses and the use of other linguistic devices to ensure the texts 'hangs together'.
4. Take a coherent piece of writing and ask the group to remove all the elements that connect the various sentences and give the piece cohesion. Compare the two pieces of writing and discuss their effectiveness.

Use a range of writing styles for different purposes

1. Ask learners to be on an editorial board for a magazine and to discuss the various types of items that could be included and the styles required for the different item types. Learners can then contribute to production of the items to produce a draft of the magazine.
2. Take one situation and explore the way the writing styles would differ according to the intended audience. For instance, the learner could be asked to support or object to a new runway at a local airport and to write a letter to local residents and the council, adapting each accordingly.

3. Ask learners to produce two different versions of promotional material for a new toy, one aimed at children the other aimed at adults.
4. Recount the same event, for instance an accident or a theft, for two different audiences; for instance, a friend and the police or insurance company.

Use a range of sentence structures, including complex sentences, and paragraphs to organise written communication effectively

1. Examine and discuss a complex piece of writing, looking specifically at the inevitable mix of simple, compound and complex sentence structures.
2. Take a piece of writing with a mix of simple and compound sentences, asking candidates to reduce the number of sentences by forming complex sentences, yet retaining all the detail and sense of the original piece.
3. Produce a single block of text and ask learners to discuss where the paragraph breaks should occur.

Punctuate written text using commas, apostrophes and inverted commas accurately

1. Ask learners to proof read and correct various texts with punctuation omitted.
2. Construct various sentences and ask learners to insert apostrophes in the right place. For example: "I didnt have a cats chance in hell of knowing why Europes tallest buildings flags were at half-mast; its possible that my uncles explanation wasnt right either."
3. Ensure learners are as secure as possible in their use of commas. Discuss the different uses of commas, eg, for bracketing information, for separating items in a list, for joining two complete sentences into one sentence using a suitable connecting word, or for indicating the omission of words (also known as the gapping comma).
4. Use very simple texts, such as some children's literature, to explore the use of commas in context.
5. Explore the effect on sense or meaning of a sentence by including or omitting a comma.

Ensure written work is fit for purpose and audience, with accurate spelling and grammar that support clear meaning

1. Ask learners to discuss the differing requirements of writing styles and content for various audiences. Compare and contrast specific texts written for different audiences and ask learners to construct similar texts.
2. Ask learners to rewrite short texts for different audiences and purposes. For example, news story for a local and national audience.

GLOSSARY OF LANGUAGE TECHNIQUES / FEATURES

This glossary has been produced to enable centres to focus their teaching on some of the more common language techniques used in the source material for Functional Skills English Level 2 Reading papers. However, it is useful to note that many of these techniques should be taught with a view to learners incorporating them in their Functional Skills English Writing and Functional Skills English Speaking and Listening exams.

Teaching should always be underpinned by the Adult Literacy Core Curriculum. Although not all the language techniques in this glossary are referenced in the Core Curriculum, the vast majority are. Two lists have been devised: the first representing the techniques a competent Level 2 candidate should be able to identify, and the second representing a list of, arguably, more advanced techniques that could be taught, if time permits.

Additional or advanced language techniques from the second list on page 39 may be identified in any reading material, including the Functional Skills English Reading source materials; therefore, although it is not a requirement that these are taught, if candidates identify more advanced techniques, marks would be awarded accordingly.

Common Language Techniques / Features

Alliteration - repeating the same letter or consonant sound at the beginning of adjacent or closely connected words for specific effect

Bias – writing that favours one point of view; unbalanced argument in favour of one thing over another

Cliché - an over-used, common expression

Colloquial / informal language / slang – writing in the style of informal or familiar speech; a conversational style

Contrast – contrasting opinions, for example, for specific effect, typically to highlight one point of view

Direct address to the reader – writing in the second person narrative

Emotive language - words that stir the readers' emotions for specific effect, often to persuade

Formal language - language following strict, established grammatical conventions, typically used for serious or official communication

Humour - used to lighten the overall tone through exaggeration, irony, puns etc

Hyperbole – exaggeration used to evoke strong feelings or create an impression which is not meant to be taken literally

Idiom – a phrase not to be taken literally; a phrase whose meaning cannot be deduced from the individual words

Imagery - similes, metaphors and personification; comparing something 'real' with something 'imagined'

Imperative – a command; demanding attention or action

Instruction – succinct use of the imperative to produce a step by step guide, for example

Jargon / technical language - the vocabulary peculiar to a particular trade, profession, or group

Metaphor - a word or phrase used to imply figurative, not literal or 'actual', resemblance

Rhetorical question – a question that doesn't demand an answer, often used to engage the reader

Repetition - the repetition of a word or phrase to achieve a particular effect

Persuasive language – language designed to change the reader's point of view or to prompt an action

Positive language – the choice of specific words to consciously or unconsciously influence the reader

Rule of three - a writing principle that suggests that things that come in threes are funnier, more satisfying, or more effective than other numbers of things, and readers are more likely to remember the information

Simile - a phrase which establishes similarity between two things to emphasise the point being made. This usually involves the words 'like' or 'as'

Strapline - short phrase conveying the essence of a brand or organisation

Tone /register - the writer's tone or voice or atmosphere or feeling that pervades the text, such as formality, informality, sadness, gloom, celebration, joy, anxiety, dissatisfaction, regret or anger

Less Common Language Techniques / Features

Active voice – to reduce formality or give emphasis to the subject

Ambiguity - a type of uncertainty of meaning in which several interpretations are plausible

Analogy - helps to establish a relationship based on similarities between two concepts or ideas

Argument – a reason or series of reasons put forward to prove a point or to persuade the reader

Chronological narrative – recounting of events in the order they occurred

Comparative – highlighting the similarity or dissimilarity between one thing and another

Contradiction - a combination of statements, ideas, or features which are opposed to one another

Creating suspense - a state or condition of mental uncertainty or excitement

Direct appeal – directly addressing the reader, often using pronouns such as *you* or *we*, for example

Explicit meaning - fully and clearly expressed or demonstrated; leaving nothing merely implied

Factual – using facts or statistics to lend credibility to an argument

Implied meaning - indicated, or suggested without being directly or explicitly stated

Irony – words used to convey the opposite of the literal meaning, often in a humorous way

Juxtaposition – placing together two contrasting objects, images, or ideas so that the differences between them are emphasized

Mnemonic – a word or code to help memorize something or to add effect

Onomatopoeia - words whose very sound is very close to the sound they are meant to depict

Passive voice – to add formality

Personification – giving inanimate objects human characteristics

Pun - the humorous use of a word or phrase so as to emphasize or suggest its different meanings, or the use of words that are alike or nearly alike in sound but different in meaning; a play on words

Sarcasm – the use of irony to convey the opposite of what has been said, or to mock or convey contempt

Satire - the use of humour, irony, exaggeration, or ridicule to expose and criticize people's stupidity or vices, particularly in the context of contemporary politics and other topical issues.

Sentence length – short, snappy sentences for effect, eg, to excite, command or add urgency

Summary - condensing writing into a shorter form, often in conclusion

Superlative – an exaggerated expression of praise. An expression of the highest possible degree

Tautology – the use of unnecessary or redundant words

This list is not exhaustive, and correct identification of other features of language will be awarded marks.

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