



# Cycle 1 Chief Examiner Report

Functional Skills English



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# Level 2

TQUK’s inaugural set of Functional Skills English exam papers were live between the start of January and the end of March 2024. Learners took one of three papers for each component with a fairly even distribution of both sits per paper and outcomes.

Reading papers covered the themes of food waste, an activity park, and a luxury hotel. Three documents per paper were presented in a variety of formats including leaflets, blog posts, emails, brochures, menus, and reviews.

The writing papers asked learners to write a variety of text types. Each paper contained either a letter or email activity alongside one of an article, a set of instructions, or a report activity.

Due to a relatively low number of exams taking place during this cycle of papers, it is difficult to make valuable statistical observations on a question-by-question, or skill-by-skill basis. This report will comment on broader points, where learners have demonstrated apparent strengths and weaknesses, as well as some recommendations for exam preparation.

We are hopeful that future reports will be able to draw on a larger pool of learner responses and provide a good mix of quantitative and qualitative analysis.

## Pass marks

	Reading	Writing
On Screen Paper 1	18	33
On Screen Paper 2	18	33
On Screen Paper 3	18	33

## Level 2 Reading

Learners performed well across the three exam papers, and it was pleasing to see a good amount of engagement with the documents. The significant majority of learners answered all questions, but not always every part of each question. Learners are advised to check the precise wording of a question to ensure they have addressed each part.

Learners understood the texts and were largely able to offer rewardable comments on the information in them, their purpose, and their style/tone. Those that achieved a clear pass were consistent across all or most skills and were able to exemplify as well as identify in areas such as point of view, formal and informal language, and language and organisational features.

They have sometimes mixed-up language and organisational features or offered examples when they were asked to comment on how these impact the reader. It is recommended that learners revise these areas thoroughly and be prepared to exemplify and/or comment on the impact on the reader.

In the questions relating to organisational features, learners are often asked how these features help the reader, but too frequently give insufficient or simplistic responses. They should be prepared to make specific reference to the texts in their answers.

Question 10 of each paper asks learners to make comparisons between two of the three documents. It provides them with two bullet points instructing what they “should compare”.

This was an area where most learners, including some of the highest achieving, might benefit from additional preparation and a better understanding of what the question is asking and how the mark scheme is applied.

As per the bullet points, learners can be awarded up to two marks for each valid comparison of “what the documents say” and up to two marks for each valid comparison of “the way the authors write”.

We have seen examples of learners producing lengthy responses to this question, paraphrasing the documents without making any explicit comparisons. They frequently address the first bullet point with two or more comparisons without addressing the second. Learners can provide examples when making comparisons, but they should not do this instead of making additional distinct points.

## Level 2 Writing

Generally, learners engaged with the topics and wrote detailed responses of an appropriate length. They were able to communicate their ideas clearly and coherently. They showed a strength in their use of language for audience and purpose with responses in the top band using persuasive techniques effectively.

Whilst learners' use of punctuation was frequently accurate, an appropriate range was not seen often even in the highest scoring responses. Centres should coach learners to ensure they use a range of punctuation from those listed in the mark scheme.

Learners were rewarded for using both organisational features and discourse markers, but too often wrote only in paragraphs with simple and compound sentences. This is reflected also in lower scores for their construction of consistent and accurate complex sentences.

When marking, a sentence is considered complex when it communicates more than one idea. It should contain a main and minor clause. To be considered accurate these ideas should be clearly linked. Consistency is partly dependent on the length of a learner's text, but we would expect to see these used in a way that supports varied, clear, and coherent writing.

TQUK's examination team rewarded the use of formatting features outside of those explicitly listed in appendix 1 of the mark schemes where they had been used appropriately. Learners performed particularly well here when writing letters and emails, where they could be rewarded for using addresses, subjects, greetings/salutations, and an appropriate close, but frequently did not meet the top band when writing reports, articles, and sets of instructions.

Learners should be coached to use the required number of formatting features in their writing, even when the need for them is not immediately apparent. For example, a set of instructions might include a heading and subheadings, bullet points, and numbered lists. A leaflet or article might contain any of the above as well as an attribution, strapline, or "any other relevant formatting feature".

Please note, there were insufficient entries for on screen Level 1 and paper-based tests to produce helpful Cycle 1 reports.

