



# Cycle 2 Chief Examiner Report

Functional Skills English



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# Level 1

Learners took one of three papers for both reading and writing components with a small but even distribution of sittings and outcomes per paper.

In reading, learners were asked to answer 15 questions on two documents. Themes included safety and behaviour at work, volunteering, social media, fitness, and educational trips.

In their writing exams, learners were asked to produce a variety of text types including letters and emails, reports, leaflets, reviews, and articles.

To aid exam preparation, centres and learners are encouraged to use the specification and mock assessment materials available on the TQUK website, alongside this report. Cycle 2 saw a five-fold increase in the number of level 1 exams compared with the previous cycle. However, numbers remain much lower than level 2. As such, this report will make limited and broad comments on learners' strengths and areas for improvement.

Many of these areas for improvement, such as subject content areas 19 and 25, have direct parallels with those mentioned in the level 2 section of this report.

# Level 1 Reading

Overall, we have seen learners who have engaged well with the documents and the majority of learners attempted all questions. They have shown a strong ability in inferring meaning from images and distinguishing between fact and opinion. We have seen improved responses in question 15, where learners are asked to compare the two documents.

More so than in level 2, we have seen some learners over-answer questions that ask for a limited response. This ranges from learners including too many language or organisational features, to giving more examples from the text than requested. In these scenarios, examiners cannot identify the intended answer and where part of the response is incorrect, learners are not awarded marks. For example, if a question asks for one organisational feature, and the text contains subheadings and bullet points, a learner responding “subheadings, bullet points, captions” will score no marks.

Overall learners responded well to subject content area 9, where they are asked to identify and understand the main purpose, points, and ideas of the texts. However, learners should be coached to use phrases such as “to inform”, “to advise”, etc. when asked to identify the main purpose.

Lastly, learners are encouraged to use appropriate reference materials to support in giving the meaning of words and to support in understanding specialist words.

# Level 1 Writing

There are many similarities between learners' performances in level 1 and level 2 writing exams. They have usually understood the type of text they have been asked to write and have used appropriate language and sometimes formatting features. They generally had no problem meeting the minimum word count, and learners achieving clear passes did so with clear and coherent writing that considered the needs of audience and purpose.

Learners do not usually use the planning space available in paper-based exams, or the notes function in on screen exams and are encouraged to do so to ensure their responses consider all aspects of the task and are sufficiently clear in communicating their ideas.

It's apparent that learners are not effectively proofreading their responses. We frequently see spelling errors from mistyping such as "anywaty" and "colud". When preparing for writing assessments, learners should do so without the aid of spell-checking software and be coached to review their work for avoidable errors.

As with level 2, learners are often using an insufficient range of punctuation and punctuation accuracy in general should be improved. This includes the use of capital letters and full stops. These are sometimes absent throughout responses with lengthy, run-on sentences. This is reflected in learners' marks for subject content area 25, with most learners rarely using complex sentences with consistency and accuracy, and subject content area 20, where varied sentence structure is needed.

# Level 1 Pass Marks

Examination Paper	Reading	Writing
On Screen Paper 4	12	30
On Screen Paper 5	12	30
On Screen Paper 6	12	30
Paper Based Paper 4	12	30
Paper Based Paper 5	12	30
Paper Based Paper 6	12	30

More information about TQUK's Functional Skills qualifications, including specifications and sample assessment materials, is available on the TQUK website: [Functional Skills Resources](#).

## Level 2

TQUK's second set of Functional Skills English exam papers were live between April and August 2024. Learners took one of three papers for each component with an even distribution of both sittings per paper and outcomes.

There were no changes to the structure of TQUK's Functional Skills English papers. The question types and wording remained consistent with those seen in cycle 1. To best understand these, providers and learners are encouraged to familiarise themselves with the specification and mock assessment materials available on the [TQUK website](#).

Reading papers covered themes of the Cycling to Work Scheme, recycling, and workplace well-being. Three documents per paper were presented in a variety of formats including leaflets, blog posts, webpages, factsheets, emails, articles, and book extracts.

Across two activities per writing paper, learners were asked to produce a variety of text types including emails, reviews, articles, sets of instructions, and leaflets.

Cycle 2 saw a significant increase in exams compared to cycle 1. The comments in this report are based on the statistical evidence of learners' strengths and areas for improvement, as well as our examiners' feedback and the observations of the Chief Examiner. Where appropriate, this report will make recommendations for exam preparation.



## Level 2 Reading

Learners engaged well with the documents in all three papers. Most learners attempted all questions, but did not always answer every part of each question. Learners are advised to check the precise wording of a question to ensure they have addressed each part.

Learners should be careful not to give more responses than requested in the question. For example, we have seen a small number offer multiple language features when asked specifically for one. In this scenario, learners can only be rewarded if all responses are correct. Occasionally, learners will offer a rewardable point, but score no marks as they have included another, incorrect point. This has been more apparent in level 1 reading but was still evident in a minority of level 2 responses.

TQUK does not utilise multiple choice style questions. However, questions on subject content area 18b (distinguishing between fact and opinion) functionally operate in this way, with learners asked to identify whether two statements from the text are fact or opinion. On average, this was the highest scoring question style in all three papers.

Elsewhere, learners showed strengths in subject content areas 11 and 17, showing a good ability to identify levels of formality and bias and pick out the main points of texts. Those achieving 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.

We have seen several learners offer organisational features when they have been asked to provide language features, as well as an overall weakness in subject content area 14. On average, learners achieved less than half of the available marks here compared to nearly two-thirds of available marks for questions involving organisational features (subject content area 16). Learners achieving a clear pass were generally competent in both.

As with cycle 1, in the questions relating to organisational features learners are often asked how these features help the reader, but sometimes give insufficient or simplistic responses. They should be prepared to make specific references to the texts in their answers.

Subject content area 13 used two styles of question in cycle 2. In questions where learners are asked to exemplify a statement “Give **three** phrases that suggest this”, they were generally able to return at least two appropriate phrases. However, when given three phrases from the text and asked, “What does **each** phrase suggest?” learners often paraphrased the statements. Learners must demonstrate an ability to “identify implicit and inferred meaning” in their responses to this style of question.

It was mentioned in the cycle 1 Chief Examiner Report that learners would benefit from additional preparation and a better understanding of what question 10 (subject content area 12) is asking and how it is assessed.



This question appears with similar wording at the end of each reading paper. It provides learners with two bullet points instructing what they “should compare”. 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”.

Learners should be prepared to give two points on each of these bullet points. When commenting on the way the authors write, learners should look to compare linguistic, stylistic, and tonal similarities and differences.

## Level 2 Writing

Generally, learners engaged well with the topics producing texts of an appropriate level of detail and at an appropriate length (as specified in subject content area 24).

They have shown strengths in using language and register to suit their audience and purpose. High scoring responses have used persuasive techniques appropriately and effectively.

At level 2 we have seen a positive standard of spelling, but learners are encouraged to use more complex and specialist words to achieve the highest marks for subject content area 22.

In cycle 2, we have seen some stronger responses in the areas highlighted in the cycle 1 Chief Examiner Report. However, subject content 20 and 28 remain areas for improvement.

Whilst learners' use of punctuation (subject content area 20) was often 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. To achieve the highest marks here, learners must use "a **range** of punctuation [...]" clearly and correctly, including both simple and complex sentence structures, and to provide clarity and emphasis".

To be fully rewarded in subject content area 28, learners must use both consistent and accurate complex sentences, as well as the appropriate use of paragraphs.

We would expect to see these used in a way that supports varied, clear, and coherent writing.

As mentioned in the cycle 1 Chief Examiner Report, learners can be rewarded for the use of formatting features outside of those explicitly listed in appendix 1 of the mark schemes where they are used effectively and 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 other types of texts. Learners should be coached to use the required number of formatting features in their writing, alongside the appropriate features for different types of texts. Centres and learners can refer to appendix 1 of the mock assessment mark schemes on the TQUK website for examples of appropriate formatting features.

# Level 2 Pass Marks

Examination Paper	Reading	Writing
On Screen Paper 4	18	33
On Screen Paper 5	19	33
On Screen Paper 6	18	33
Paper Based Paper 4	18	33
Paper Based Paper 5	18	34
Paper Based Paper 6	19	33

