

Section A (this section is marked out of 20)

Functional writing

By the end of this session, a learner should be able to:

- Define functional writing.
- State the aspects of Functional Writing.
- Mention examples of Functional Writing.

What is Functional Writing?

This is a skill in language which conveys different kinds of special purpose communication.

Aspects of Functional Writing.

Three major aspects are looked for by examiners in this section A of paper one. They include:

1. Format.

This is the arrangement, plan and design of the writing for example speech, minutes and letters among others. It refers to what a given form of functional writing should contain. For instance format of curriculum vitae (what a curriculum vitae should contain).

2. Content.

This is the chosen message or subject matter to be conveyed. The message should be organised systematically and developed logically. It also refers to the relevance of what a candidate has written to the question asked.

3. Language.

Language used in functional writing should adhere to spelling rules, use correct and clear words and feature well-constructed sentences.

Examples of Functional Writing.

- Letters.
- Curriculum Vitae.
- Speech writing.
- Minutes.
- Memorandum.
- Dialogue.
- Advertisement.
- Report writing.

- Invoice.
- Biography.
- Autobiography.
- Newspaper article.
- Agreements.
- Standing orders.
- Giving directions.
- Transcript of interview.
- Eulogy. etc.

Errors in Functional Writing. (What a candidate should avoid).

- **Wrong format.** (When a candidate is asked to write Minutes of a meeting and the candidate writes a speech, he/she gets automatic zero. Hence mastery of format of each example of functional writing is important).
- **Disjointedness.** (Candidates are discouraged from skipping lines when writing as it may lead to loss of marks).
- **Wrong interpretation of the question.** (Candidates must read and understand the question well before attempting).

N.B: A candidate is expected to master the **format** of the above listed examples of functional writing since the **format** carries more marks (In most cases the **format** carries **08 marks**, **Content 06 marks** and **Language 06marks**).

Section B (this section is also marked out of 20).

Composition.

By the end of this session, a learner should be able to:

- Define composition.
- Mention the types of composition.
- State the qualities of a good composition.
- Mention the common mistakes in composition.
- State the strengths in composition.

What is composition?

The word composition comes from the word to **compose** which means to create. Therefore a composition/essay is a piece of continuous writing logically organized to express ideas, feelings or one's opinion about a particular topic or subject. It also refers to the ability to come up with a creative piece of writing with a specific message to the reader.

N.B. Since composition involves putting ideas and information together for others to read. It should be written in a logical, coherent and very interesting style from the beginning to the end.

Types of Composition.

There are mainly four types of composition. They include:

1. Narrative composition.

This is considered as the easiest type to write. This is because it simply requires one to tell a story or give an orderly account of events. Although some narratives are real, most are imaginary/fictitious (not real). However unreal the events, they must be presented in a way that convinces the reader that they could have actually happened.

2. Descriptive composition.

This one gives full details about a place, person, thing (s), scene or event. The details should be actual. That is appealing to the senses of touch, taste, hearing, smell and sight.

Use of adverbs, adjectives, verbs, similes and metaphors can go a long way in creating a vivid picture in the reader's mind.

When describing a person/personal features, it is important to look at the size, behavior and physical appearance.

3. Discursive/argumentative composition.

This requires one to present facts with an aim of persuading or convincing the reader to accept the writer's point of view. The argument must be based on logical reasoning as the question asked demands. There must be evidence carefully selected to support the particular view point/stand the writer has chosen.

4. Expository composition.

An expository composition is usually based on actual facts because it explains a system, process, institution or function. For that matter points must be logically organized from one step to another so that the message is not disturbed.

Qualities of a good composition.

- **It's originality** (It must be your own creating not copied from a textbook a story that had earlier been written by another person).
- **Grammar** (It should have accepted grammatical structure and use).
- **Punctuation marks** (correct use of punctuation marks such as coma, quotation mark, question mark, apostrophe among others).
- **Spellings** (There should be no spelling error).
- **Use of proper vocabulary** (Use words whose meaning you know).
- **Handwriting** (Ensure your handwriting is legible i.e. can be read. You will be penalised for being illegible and communicating vaguely).
- **Paragraphing** (Write your story in the accepted format of writing according to the British standards).
- **Title** (Your story must have a title and what you write should be based on the title).
- **Coherence.** (Your story should be clear and it should flow. Do not beat around the bush).
- **Unity** (All sentences in a specific paragraph should be dealing with a single idea in question).
- **Adequate development** (Adequately develop all the paragraphs).
- **Tenses.** (Use tenses correctly. Irregular verbs should be carefully handled because their past tense and perfect tenses are unpredictable; for example don't say – It has hurted me. Instead say – It has hurt me).
- **Sentence variation** (vary the sentence structure. For example, instead of saying: He is not only a thief but also a sorcerer, you could say: Not only is he a thief but also a sorcerer).
- **Spacing of words** (Do not write two or more separate words as one word. For example: Alot which is wrong. The correct one is a lot, written as two separate words. Some words exist as one word but some students tend to separate them e.g. some body instead of somebody, every body instead of everybody, him self instead of himself).
- **The use of direct speech** (If you are to write exactly what someone said, do not forget to put the sentence in inverted commas. for instance: Precious said, 'You are a hardworking boy.')
- **The use of proverbs** (Use proverbs correctly).
- **The use of idioms** (Use idioms as they appear in the dictionary. They should be formal. Never use informal idioms or formulate your own

because idioms are specific, they do not change. Never say for example: He is *the pineapple of my eye* instead of *the apple of my eye*. Even if to you pineapples are sweeter than apples).

- **Creation of appealing situations** (Vividly describe the events in your story to sustain the interest of the reader).
- **The word limit** (Stick to the word limit you have been given. If you write in excess or less, you will surely be penalised).
- **Use of figurative language** (Such as metaphor, simile, personification among others to create a vivid picture in the mind of the reader and to sustain the reader's interest as well).

Common mistakes in composition writing.

- **Wrong question numbering.** (Make sure you write the correct question number for the question you have attempted).
- **Wrong interpretation of the question** (Change of subject or distortion of the question may be awarded a zero for a question not asked, for instance if you are asked about "the most scaring moment in your life" and you write about the most "exciting moment").
- **Forgetting to write the title** (A title is a must. The title is simply generated from what you are writing about. For instance if you are asked to write about the day you will never forget, and you would like to write about what transpired during your brother's wedding, your title can simply be: My Brother's Wedding. With this title, the reader can discern that all you have written about happened during your brother's wedding. The title makes writing easy for you as all what you write should be based on the title. When the title is in capital letters, you don't underline but when it's written in small letters, you can underline).
- **Wrong Spelling** (You should ensure you have correctly spelt all words used. Take special note of homophones i.e. words with similar pronunciations yet different spellings. These bring confusion when wrongly used for example meat, meet, beat, bit, hard, had, heard).
- **Writing incorrect figures of date, money, year, month, time etc.** (Date: This should be written in full e.g. 17th June, 2020. However, computer has raised the th but that's not how it should appear, yours must rest on the line. Days and months are written

beginning with capital letter at the beginning, in the middle and at the end of the sentence. E.g. Monday, Tuesday, Sunday, June, November, December. Time e.g. five O'clock. Money should be written in words as well).

- **Use of contractions** (Words should be written in full but not shortened. E.g. didn't should be written as did not, Can't cannot among others. Avoid shortening words in composition).
- **Use of informal vocabulary and idioms** (This should be avoided. The use of kicked the bucket as an idiom to mean someone has died is informal).
- **Use of abbreviations** (abbreviations should be written in full in composition. E.g. instead of UNSA write Uganda National Students' Association. However, some acronyms have been assimilated in written language but when used should be put in capital letters for example TASO. She was suffering from AIDS not Aids).
- **Poor paragraph and paragraph links.** (Paragraph should be in a well organised manner. Using subtitles for continuous composition especially in section B. Note that some functional writing types need the sub titles).
- **Brevity and verbosity** (You must write your composition within the word limit. Brevity means writing less words than is required whereas verbosity implies writing excess words than is required. Both should be avoided because they can lead to deduction of your marks).
- **Poor punctuation** (Misuse of punctuation marks can lead to mistakes. Put commas, question marks, full stops and exclamations wherever they are required, never forget them. Read through your work to ensure that they have been properly used).
- **Uncoordinated shifting of tenses** (Stick to the tense your story is based on. For instance if you are writing a story about what has already happened, your predominant tense will be the past tense).
- **Use of short forms** (Words should be written in full in composition. Avoid writing dormitory as dorm, library as lib, examination as exam and so on).

- **Plagiarism** (This is where a student writes someone else's work and claim it's his/her own. Never write a story you have read from another novel, play, textbook or watched in a film and including any memorised passage from elsewhere in your composition. You are expected to be creative and original).
- **Incorrect word order** (Stick to the acceptable order of words. For instance a student may end up writing Headmaster Deputy instead of Deputy Headmaster).
- **Disjointedness** (This refers to skipping or avoiding some lines on the same page and using sub – titles unnecessarily. This should be avoided).
- **Colloquial English and direct translation** .Don't use those terms indicated *slang, colloquial or informal* in your dictionaries. The other problem is **direct translation**; for example;
When my eyes met the Headteacher I knew I was dead.
You will go there tomorrow?
The whole day we were eating money.
- **Repetition and mentioning the obvious**, for example:
 My mother she is a wonderful woman. Just say; my mother is wonderful.
 Kneel down on your knee. (The action of "kneeling" itself means to be on our knees).
 Clap your hands. (What else would we clap?) Just say kneel down or clap/Let's clap for him.
 I asked her again for the second time but she still did not say anything.
- **Noun errors**. Singular and plural uncountable nouns should be written in singular e.g. water not waters; meat not meats and proper nouns should be started with capital letters. E.g Arua, Nebbi, Padila, Milda not arua, nebbi, padila, milda.
- **Incorrect use of Correlative conjunctions**. These are "related" conjunctions or pair of words which combine two independent clauses. They should not be interchanged. For example scarcely.....when, so....that, no sooner.....than, too.....to, neither.....nor.
- **Wrong use of personal pronouns**. The simple tense is the one which causes most mistakes with third person pronouns. For

example She want rice instead of she wants rice. 'They goes' instead of 'They go'.

- **British versus American English.**

Usually British English is more acceptable for all UCE English language examinations and your dictionary will help you to identify which words are in British English and which are not.

Strengths in Composition

- Variety of punctuation marks especially: quotation, question and exclamation marks.
- Variety of apt vocabulary, similes, idioms, proverbs etc.
- Variety of sentence structure.
- Language growth.
- Sentence inversion.
- Personification.
- Irony.
- Suspense.
- Metaphor.
- Euphemism.
- Clarity, coherence, humour.
- Creativity and originality.

We shall elaborate more on them in the due course of our learning. Thank you.