

RaPAL Response to Draft Literacy Standards, July 2016

To what extent do you agree that the structure and layout of the draft literacy standards is appropriate?

A consultation with RaPAL members, which included literacies teachers, researchers and teacher trainers across adult, further, community and higher education, returned the following perspectives on the proposed new standards. Where the nature of the standards cannot fully respond to these, we suggest consideration in a preamble and appropriate footnotes linking to further guidance. Ideally, there would be the further capacity to “click through” to a sufficient range of sample outline activities for development of any given criteria and further resources. This would contribute to alleviating concerns of simplistic mechanical outcome listings, recognise the breadth of curriculum implied, and provide guidance to those seeking clarity in more depth.

It is useful to be able to access each level both individually, and in comparison with those at either side. Hopefully, an online form of representation which allows alternation between the two can be developed. It would also be useful to point out that (most prominently in relation to speaking and listening skills), learners have 'spikey profiles' and it is not unusual to have a learner with L1 speaking and listening, E3 reading and E2 writing – a modular examination route recognises and motivates appropriately directed achievement.

There were suggestions that grouping criteria (according to theoretical underpinnings) within levels would be helpful. It may be useful to point out that the scenarios are indicative of the diversity of real life contexts and skills applications, rather than comprehensive (unlike the criteria which are intended to be comprehensive); and that addressing these scenarios requires a combination of the skills listed in the criteria.

To what extent do you agree that the content of the draft literacy standards is sufficiently comprehensive?

The preamble is missing significant helpful sections (ref. numeracy standards 'A note on content and levels') and the paragraph “Possessing such skills means... customers etc” is contentiously simplified. We would be happy to help with this. We also refer to our suggestions in Q13 in respect of a preamble. In this, it may be useful to compare literacy skills and practices, with English; more so to emphasise that literacies skills, and their development, are highly interconnected and that the standards seek to simplify rather than illustrate this complexity. It is useful to underscore the overlap of teaching and learning methodologies with literacies development, such as

- confidence-building, working in co-operation with others, and practising individual composition.
- how and where to extend practice, consolidation and long-term development
- creative, expressive, transformative and critical literacies are key to social and personal development and frequently provide a hook to full learner engagement within activities
- growing a love of reading, writing and the spoken word

In the following, we give more detailed feedback on the criteria:

Broadly, text types and suggested activities in many areas of the document (not all) could be significantly more indicative of diversity of genres and socio-economic activities and distributed more evenly across reading, writing and speaking and listening; equally there appears to be undue emphasis in many parts of the document on 'instructional' texts. Some suggestions are included below – these are not meant to be comprehensive but to illustrate gaps identified.

Reading at all levels

'recognise different purposes of texts at this level' should explicitly refer to identifying key functional features thereof and to critical reading situating a text in its context and learner interpretation appropriate to level

should refer to skimming, scanning and detail reading applications appropriate to level

Entry Reading

Reading Entry 2 'In texts such as letters and diagrams.' could include, e.g. "simple recipes, advertisements, telephone books"

Reading Entry 3 'In texts such as simple instructions and short reports.' could include, e.g. simple straight forward "informational texts, manuals on topics of interest, articles or reviews, sales literature"

Entry Writing

should start to reference layout and organisation markers, appropriate to level (heading, page numbers, image, section headings, bullet points)

Entry 1 w) as well as spelling, should start to incorporate recognition of basic grammar, ie. lexical versus grammatical items

Entry 2 dd) to present more information in basic order; ff) adjectives appropriately jj) also have a clearer understanding of lexical and grammatical categories and identifiers; and mention of awareness of informal (mobile and social media) versus formal written styles

Entry 3 cc) recognising information sources where relevant; gg) also starting to use adverbials; kk) also meaning and coherence

Entry level Examples

include reference to involvement in democratic and community processes (notices, minutes) and faith-based interaction, as this is a significant literacy activity for many learners; and basic utility bills, banking and appointments earlier

include selecting information sources appropriate to level

Entry 1 citizen and community 'sorting bottles for disposal at a bottle bank' should be 'items for recycling' (bottles are sorted by colour)

Entry 1 Leisure could be more inclusive of a diversity of individuals and groups, ie 'in a keep fit class' could be "at a community event", 'buying tickets at the cinema or theatre' could be "at events or shows", 'recognising titles of' could include events and shows, 'writing greeting cards accurately' may not need "accurately", 'tabloid' could be local newsletter.

Entry 1 Education and training could include joining a library

Entry 2 Citizen and community could include participating in a community meet, and identifying common information sources (GP, library, Job Centre, education venue, community or religious centre)

Entry 2 'Work, paid and unpaid work' includes a number of examples that appear more relevant to E1 e.g. 'vending machines' could be simple "ordering and payment machines" such as parking, 'signing in' could be "introducing and querying at reception" and could include main points of diagrammatic health and safety notices and payslips

Entry 2 Domestic and everyday life could include simple billing and banking

Entry 2 Education and training could include simple recounts, making notes inc information sources/ names, using a library and or study support, 'practising spelling using a spelling list app' could include spelling and grammar

Entry 3 Work paid and unpaid work could include following straightforward procedures or instructions, identifying from simple descriptions, and making simple notes from talking or researching information in person or online, writing up a simple account, seeking support with information in extended form-filling, understand how short announcements might be relevant to you

Entry 3 Domestic and everyday life could include compare information from two sources e.g. when selecting a service or forming an opinion

Entry 3 Education and Training has a heavy emphasis on 'spelling', which should be "spelling and grammar", and should include more reading and writing activity, e.g. write a short report, find and note a range of information for a purpose, in a group project plan and allocate tasks to people, find sections in a library or key words for a search

Reading L1 and L2

The bolding and text types in the introduction are inconsistent

Read and understand and Read and obtain information in the L2 introduction appear better suited to L1. L2 should include comment on comparison, bias and persuasion

L2 o) could include prose and s) – what is the difference between person and writer's voice?

Writing L1 and L2

The bolding between levels is inconsistent

L1 dd) could also refer to different Englishes (spelling and grammar) as well as formal v informal punctuation

L1 ee) and adverbials

L2 kk) pronouns and other organisational markers across texts

Level 1 and 2 Examples

Level 1 Citizen and community involvement in a community project should be at all levels but could for example reference activity in relation to minutes or notices at L1

Level 1 Work, including paid and unpaid could include completing a feedback or monitoring form, writing a simple report, creating a product comparison table, write an incident log, set up a meeting, create a flyer

Level 1 Domestic and everyday life 'contributing to a parents' meeting at school' could be at any level but perhaps leading an area of activity or specific area of enquiry at L1

Level 1 Education and training 'carrying out written tasks for assessment purposes' occurs at all levels. Could include write a report of several sections including appropriate images, create a questionnaire, write up the outcomes of a survey or interview, write up the results of an information search including reference to information sources, write up a product comparison, write a project evaluation, write a project plan, write a meeting agenda, write minutes of a meeting, write a notice

Do the standards effectively indicatively cover the requirements of the spectrum of socio-economic activity?

To what extent do you agree that the language and terminology within the draft literacy standards is clear?

There are quite a few proofreading errors, with some affecting meaning:

Reading Entry 3 points p and v are repeats of each other, whereas instructional texts should be an indicative example of a range of text genres and their features

p.13 Examples - Entry 3 'identify relevant' should be "identifying", 'following an online new programme and be able to for a view on the subject' should be "being... form", 'at work at check' should be "to check"

The language implies significant underpinning specialist knowledge, derived from teacher training and guides such as the Core Curriculum. This should therefore be referenced so it is explicit in approaching and interpreting the standards by any and all.

Do you have any final comments about the draft literacy standards?

The draft standards modernise but could include a fuller range of socio-economic activities and digital engagement. A high level of concern was expressed at "wishlisting" outcomes which do not reveal the complexity of underlying curriculum coverage.