

Formal Letter – Exam-Style Writing Tasks

English

Level 2 Writing

Two exam-style tasks · planning grid · mark scheme · model answer with examiner notes

Know the format: a formal letter

Layout: your address top right → date → the recipient's role and address on the left → **Dear Sir or Madam** (or **Dear Mr/Ms + surname** if a name is given) → optional subject line (Re: ...) → 4–5 paragraphs → **Yours faithfully** (Sir/Madam) or **Yours sincerely** (named person) → your full name.

Paragraph plan: 1 why you are writing · 2 first main point with specific detail · 3 second point / effect on you or others · 4 what you want to happen and by when · 5 polite close.

Register: formal throughout – no contractions, no slang, no exclamation marks. Polite but firm. Use connectives (furthermore, however, as a result, consequently).

Useful phrases

- I am writing to express my concern about / in response to / to request...
- As a resident of ... for ... years, I...
- The council's own figures show that...
- For these residents, this would mean...
- I appreciate that ... However, ...
- I would urge you to consider...
- I would be grateful if you could confirm...
- I look forward to your response.

Task 1 – exam-style (Pearson layout)

Task 1 21 marks · about 35 minutes

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Information

Your local council has announced plans to close the town's only public library and replace it with an online-only service. The council says this will save £180,000 a year. A public consultation is open until the end of the month, and residents have been invited to write to the Chair of the Leisure Committee with their views.

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Writing task

Write a formal letter to the Chair of the Leisure Committee giving your views on the proposed library closure.

In your writing, you should:

- say whether you agree or disagree with the closure and why
- describe the effect the closure would have on people in the town
- suggest what the council should do instead

You should aim to write about **250 to 300** words.

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Plan first (5 minutes)

Purpose + audience (formal, council)	Para 1: why I am writing + my view	Para 2: effect on people (specific groups, numbers)
Para 3: second effect / what the library does	Para 4: alternative suggestion	Close: request + Yours faithfully

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[illegible]

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Task 2 – exam-style (Highfield layout)

Task 2

27 marks · about 30 minutes

Information

You have worked for a delivery company for three years. Your manager has told all staff that they must work compulsory Saturday shifts from next month. You have caring responsibilities on Saturdays.

You make these notes: contract says Monday–Friday · caring responsibilities on Saturdays, no one else available · happy to work extra weekday hours · other staff also affected · want a meeting to discuss

Writing task

Write a formal letter to your manager about the new Saturday shifts.

In your writing, you should:

- explain why the Saturday shifts are a problem for you
- suggest an alternative that would work for you and the company
- ask for what you would like to happen next

You should aim to write about **200 to 250** words.

(27 marks)

Write your answer

[illegible]

This image shows a full page of blank, lined paper. It features approximately 20 horizontal grey lines spaced evenly apart, typical of notebook paper. The lines extend across the entire width of the page, leaving small margins at the top and bottom. There are no vertical lines or other markings present.

Formal Letter – Exam-Style Writing Tasks – Mark Scheme and Model Answer

How the examiner marks it, what a full-marks answer must include, and a model answer at a secure Level 2 pass standard.

Want a tutor to mark your work? Functify Learning runs live 10-week Functional Skills Level 2 English and Maths courses (small groups, mock exam included) and a 5-day self-paced revision course. Start with our free mini mock test at funtifylearning.co.uk.

How writing tasks are marked

Marks	Composition (what the examiner looks for) – Grid A	Spelling, punctuation and grammar – Grid B
Top band 9–12 (Task 1) 7–9 (Task 2)	Ideas are consistently clear, with detail used <i>effectively</i> for the purpose and audience, at the right length. Format and structure are right for the text type; paragraphs are used effectively and the writing is held together with organisational markers. A range of sentence types, including complex sentences, used accurately. Language and register suit the audience, with a wide, well-chosen vocabulary.	Top: spelling of everyday and specialist words is accurate; a range of punctuation is used correctly and for effect; grammar is consistently accurate, including tense and subject–verb agreement.
Middle band 5–8 / 4–6	Ideas are reasonably clear with an appropriate level of detail. Format and structure are appropriate; paragraphs generally accurate; cohesion mostly maintained. Range of sentences with general accuracy. Wide vocabulary appropriate to purpose and audience.	Middle: mostly accurate spelling with some errors in harder words; sentence punctuation mostly accurate; grammar generally correct.
Lower band 1–4 / 1–3	Straightforward ideas with some clarity. Some use of appropriate format, paragraphs and cohesion. Some range of sentences with some accuracy. Some appropriate vocabulary.	Lower: errors in spelling and punctuation that sometimes affect clarity; limited or inconsistent grammatical control.

Based on the published Pearson Edexcel Level 2 writing grids (Task 1 = 21 marks: 12 composition + 9 SPaG; Task 2 = 15 marks: 9 + 6). Highfield, City & Guilds and NCFE mark the same strands with different totals (e.g. 27 per task).

Indicative content – what a full answer to Task 1 must cover

- State clearly whether they agree or disagree, with a reason (e.g. disagree – not everyone has internet access; agree – the money could fund...)
- Describe effects on specific groups: older people, families with young children, students, job seekers using the computers, people without broadband
- Suggest a realistic alternative: reduced opening hours, volunteer-run days, sharing the building with another service, a smaller library in the community centre, a phased trial
- Use formal letter conventions: addresses, date, greeting, paragraphs, correct sign-off

The examiner's list is "not prescriptive" – any relevant, developed ideas score – but every bullet point in the task must be addressed.

Model answer – Task 1 (292 words)

27 Elm Grove
Brookford
BF3 2QT
21 September 2026

The Chair of the Leisure Committee
Brookford Town Hall
High Street
Brookford BF1 1AA

Dear Sir or Madam, [no name given → Yours faithfully]

Re: Proposed closure of Brookford Library [subject line – format mark]

I am writing in response to the consultation on the proposed closure of Brookford Library. As a resident of twelve years and a regular user of the library with my two children, I strongly disagree with the plan to replace it with an online-only service. [purpose + view stated in para 1]

The council's own figures show that the library had 41,000 visits last year. Many of those visitors cannot simply move online. My elderly neighbour uses the library computers every week because she has no internet at home; the job club that meets there on Tuesdays helps around twenty people a session with applications. For these residents, an online service is not an alternative – it is the removal of the only service they can use. [specific detail: numbers, examples; bullet 2 covered]

Furthermore, the library is the only free, warm, quiet space in the town centre. Since the youth club closed in 2024, it has been where teenagers do their homework and where new parents meet at the Wednesday rhyme-time session. Closing it would remove far more than a collection of books. [second effect; connective; developed point]

I appreciate that £180,000 is a significant saving. However, I would urge the council to consider reducing opening hours to four days a week and inviting the Friends of the Library group to run volunteer sessions on the other days, as a neighbouring council did in 2023 at roughly half the cost of full closure. A twelve-month trial would show whether this works before any final decision is taken. [acknowledges other side, then realistic alternative; bullet 3]

I would be grateful if you could confirm that these options will be considered by the committee, and I would welcome the opportunity to speak at the public meeting next month. [clear request + next step]

Yours faithfully,
A. Osei

Why this scores in the top band

- Every bullet in the task is answered, in order, one per paragraph – the examiner can tick them off.
- Detail is specific and believable (41,000 visits, Tuesday job club, a neighbouring council's trial). Invented detail is expected and rewarded; vague detail is not.
- Cohesion: 'Furthermore', 'However', 'For these residents' link the paragraphs; the letter reads as one argument, not a list.
- Register is formal and polite but firm – 'I would urge', 'I would be grateful if' – with no contractions or slang.
- A range of sentence types, including complex sentences with subordinate clauses, all punctuated accurately.

Where Level 2 students lose marks on this text type

- Writing 'Yours sincerely' after 'Dear Sir or Madam' (or vice versa). Named person → sincerely; Sir/Madam → faithfully.
- Stating an opinion with no supporting detail – 'the library is important to lots of people' – and repeating it in every paragraph.
- Missing one of the bullet points entirely. If the task says 'suggest what the council should do instead', a paragraph must do exactly that.
- Writing 180 words for a 250–300 word task. Under-length answers cannot reach the top band in *either* grid.