**Functional Skills English Level 1 course**

Welcome to your Functional Skills English course. This handout is intended to give you a general overview of the year and the things you will cover.

**Online studying**

We are in a unique situation, having to study online (via Zoom) for at least the first term. This means that things will look and feel different to how it would be in the classroom. Zoom is not the most effective way of learning – it’s tiring, it’s hard to work in small groups and to converse in a big group. So we will keep our time on it short. Therefore the first, and most important thing, is that you will need to do independent study online **before** each class. To do this, you will need to use ACL Gateway (aclgateway.islington.gov.uk).

I plan to arrange the lesson time as follows:

* First 30 minutes – Zoom room open for you to catch up on your independent study or ask questions about the preparation for the lesson
* Approximately one hour on Zoom as a group – reviewing, practising and applying the skills you have learned before the lesson. **Please note** the review time will be brief and **will not** be a substitute for doing the online learning.
* Homework and preparation for the next lesson – I suggest you allow about 1 hour for this. You may want to do it straight after our lesson time or at another time that is convenient for you.

**Course structure**

The autumn term generally consists of induction, diagnostic assessments and skills checks. We then move onto reading skills, followed by writing skills in the spring term. Throughout the terms we will be practising speaking and listening, and building vocabulary. In the summer term we will focus more specifically on speaking and listening, and on final assessments. Of course, this is all subject to change due to Covid-19.

**Functional Skills English**

The qualification you will be working towards is Functional Skills English. Although the majority of students will be working towards full Functional Skills English qualifications, there may be some students who are working towards different qualifications and at different levels. Your tutor will discuss this with you individually to ensure you know what you are doing. The qualifications are accredited by City and Guilds. The assessment criteria are outlined on the final page of this overview.

**You are strongly encouraged to read widely**. **You will not pass Functional Skills English if you are not aware of community or topical issues, and if you do not know the vocabulary associated with them**. Functional Skills exams test your ability to read and write but the contexts within which the tasks are set are wide ranging and might include buying a mobile phone, recycling, social media, applying for jobs, getting a passport, complaining about poor service, switching electricity supplier, fundraising for a local charity, getting a pet, contributing ideas on how to improve your community etc.

**Suggestions for reading:**

Islington Life magazine - the Council’s magazine on issues in the borough. If you don’t get one delivered, you can pick one up from a library or go online to <http://islingtonlife.london>

Life in the UK Test study guide – a useful book which explains a number of things about the UK including: UK society and population; how the country is governed; different types of housing; different services in/for the home e.g. water, Council tax, dealing with noisy neighbours; banking/finance; health; equal rights and discrimination.

Free newspapers e.g. Metro, Evening Standard, Islington Tribune – to stay up to date with national and local issues.

BBC website – not just for news but for its sections such as Lifestyle, Earth, Food.

Readtheory website – readtheory.org – useful for reading comprehension practice. You need to login (free) and bear in mind it is American so uses US spelling for some words.

**Suggestions for vocabulary development:**

Books: there are a number of vocabulary books in the library or to buy such as: Collins Easy Learning Vocabulary; English Vocabulary in Use

Websites: try: [enhancemyvocabulary.com/](http://enhancemyvocabulary.com/); [learnenglish.de](http://learnenglish.de)

**Suggestions for grammar development:**

Websites: try: [esol.britishcouncil.org](https://esol.britishcouncil.org/); [myenglishpages.com](https://www.myenglishpages.com/); [ego4u.com](https://www.ego4u.com/)

**Suggestions for improving your English conversation skills:**

Classes: Islington Centre for Refugees and Migrants is offering classes online. Contact: [islingtoncentre.co.uk](http://www.islingtoncentre.co.uk) or 020 7354 9946.

Websites: try: [oxfordonlineenglish.com](file:///C:\Users\jrobi\Google%20Drive\FS%20course%20overviews\oxfordonlineenglish.com); [esol.britishcouncil.org](https://esol.britishcouncil.org/)

**Level 1 skill standards**

The table shows the key skills you will be tested on in the exams/assessments.

**Exams/assessments**

**Speaking and listening** – one formal discussion, one presentation and a discussion following a presentation – over a maximum of 30 minutes

**Reading** – a 60 minute exam

**Writing** – an 80 minute exam

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| **Level 1 Skill standard** | **Coverage and range** |
| **Speaking, listening and**  **communication**  Text: this should include narratives, explanations, discussions, instructions, information, descriptions and presentations all of varying lengths. | 1. Identify relevant information and lines of argument in explanations or presentations  2. Make requests and ask relevant questions to obtain specific information in different contexts  3. Respond effectively to detailed questions  4. Communicate information, ideas and opinions clearly and accurately on a range of topics  5. Express opinions and arguments and support them with evidence  6. Follow and understand discussions and make contributions relevant to the situation and the subject  7. Use appropriate phrases, registers and adapt contributions to take account of audience, purpose and medium  8. Respect the turn-taking rights of others during discussions, using appropriate language for interjection |
| **Reading**  Text: this should include a range of straightforward texts on a range of topics and of varying lengths that instruct, describe, explain and persuade. | 9. Identify and understand the main points, ideas and details in texts  10.Compare information, ideas and opinions in different texts  11.Identify meanings in texts and distinguish between fact and opinion  12.Recognise that language and other textual features can be varied to suit different audiences and purposes  13.Use reference materials and appropriate strategies (e.g. using knowledge of different word types) for a range of purposes, including to find the meaning of words  14.Understand organisational and structural features and use them to locate relevant information (e.g. index, menus, subheadings, paragraphs) in a range of straightforward texts  15.Infer from images meanings not explicit in the accompanying text  16.Recognise vocabulary typically associated with specific types and purposes of texts (e.g. formal, informal, instructional, descriptive, explanatory and persuasive)  17.Read and understand a range of specialist words in context  18.Use knowledge of punctuation to aid understanding of straightforward texts |
| **Writing**  Text: this should include straightforward texts such as narratives, instructions, explanations and reports of varying lengths. | **Spelling, punctuation and grammar**  19.Use a range of punctuation correctly (e.g. full stops, question marks, exclamation marks, commas, possessive apostrophes)  20.Use correct grammar (e.g. subject-verb agreement, consistent use of different tenses, definite and indefinite articles)  21.Spell words used most often in work, study and daily life, including specialist words  **Writing composition**  22.Communicate information, ideas and opinions clearly, coherently and accurately  23.Write text of an appropriate level of detail and of appropriate length (including where this is specified) to meet the needs of purpose and audience  24.Use format, structure and language appropriate for audience and purpose  25.Write consistently and accurately in complex sentences, using paragraphs where appropriate |