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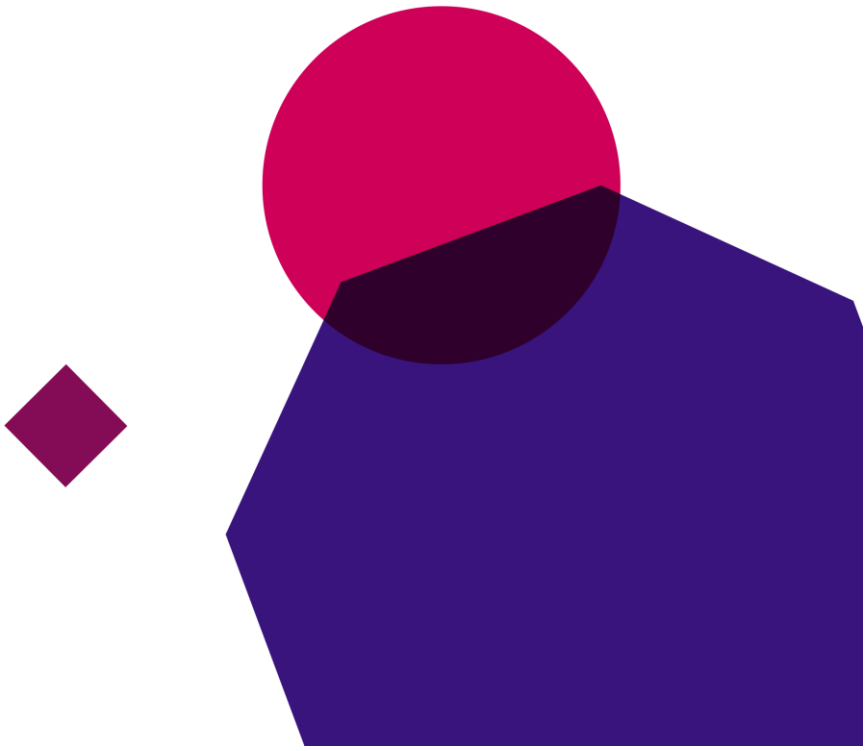
Chief Examiner's Report

Functional Skills English Writing Level 1 (4748)

4748-111 (e-volve)
4748-211 (paper-based)



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1. Introduction

The purpose of this document is to provide centres with feedback on the performance of candidates for 4748-111 and 4748-211 Functional Skills English Writing Level 1. The examinations have been available since September 2019, and this report covers the period from September 2019 to February 2020.

2. Overall Performance

This report covers the period from September 2019 to February 2020.

The majority of candidates were successful in passing the examination. For candidates who passed, the route to accumulating sufficient marks varied, but the common factor was an ability to demonstrate a good level of competence across all the Subject Content Statements.

Several of the Subject Content Statements assess areas not previously assessed in the legacy qualification (3748 Functional Skills English Writing). However, for many candidates, adequate preparation and knowledge meant that the challenges posed were successfully met.

Each exam required candidates to write two responses. The scenarios presented seemed to allow most candidates to engage with the tasks set. Whilst a significant number of candidates appeared to be unfamiliar with the format and structure requirements of some of the new requirements, in terms of document types such as narratives and reports, the scenarios themselves were sufficiently accessible to enable candidates to write responses of the required length and detail.

Most successful candidates were able to adapt their language and register to ones suitable for the tasks in hand and the intended audiences, but some candidates struggled with these aspects, not being confident in their knowledge of register and appropriate use of language for the document type and audience.

Successful candidates were generally able to communicate their ideas and opinions clearly, coherently and accurately, using complex sentences and paragraphs successfully.

Performance in spelling, punctuation and grammar varied, with successful candidates generally displaying good knowledge and skills in at least two of the three components. Weaker candidates' skills were often poor in at least two of the three components.

3. Areas for development

1. Punctuation was an area where candidates often performed poorly, losing significant marks across the two responses. Level 1 now requires candidates to successfully demonstrate the correct use of commas and possessive apostrophe. These two elements of punctuation in particular were problematic for many candidates.

2. On occasion, some responses were entirely devoid of any punctuation, and centres are reminded that punctuation is required irrespective of the type of document being written or audience being addressed.

3. Weaker candidates' responses often contained many grammar errors, with marks being lost for errors such as incorrect subject-verb agreement, incorrect verb-tense agreement, omission of definite and indefinite articles, incorrect word order and inconsistent use of tense.

4. Weaker grammar errors were often compounded by poor language use. Errors included incorrect word choice and inappropriate tone or register for the type of document being written and/or audience being addressed. Levels of formality required for different document types, and how those required levels affect word choice were issues for many candidates.

5. Frequent spelling errors in many responses not only meant the loss of marks for spelling, but also impacted upon clarity at times. Entry Levels 1-3 specify words that candidates should be able to spell correctly, and it is important that centres are aware of these lists and are using them to inform their teaching of learners preparing for Levels 1 and 2.

6. Coherence was an area weaker candidates appeared to struggle. Effective planning strategies, as well as careful reading of the scenario presented, should enable candidates to write with coherence. Responses that lacked coherence could have been improved through effective use of paragraphing, conjunctions, fronted adverbials and other discourse markers, and adopting a consistent approach and tone to the content. In addition, ensuring clear internal structure of beginning, middle and ending would greatly help coherence.

7. Format and structure were also problematic for many candidates, and this was not limited to those who were weaker. Candidates are required to be able to

write narratives, instructions, explanations, reports, letters and emails. Of these, narratives , instructions and reports proved the most problematic. It is essential that candidates are aware of the accepted format and structure requirements for all document types prior to being entered for the exam.

8. Candidates should always take note of the direction given regarding document length as overly short responses run the risk of being penalised for brevity, if it is deemed that functionality is adversely affected. As a general rule, candidates are expected to write approximately 250 words for each response.

4. Advice for centres

1. The Functional Skills English Guidance for Delivery document, available on the City & Guilds website, provides valuable guidance on the requirements of Level 1 Functional Skills English Writing, and also contains useful sample teaching activities.

2. Centres should make use of the sample papers available on the City & Guilds website and Open Assess.

3. Candidates will always be asked to write two responses, and each response will be a of a different document type and directed at a different audience. Centres should ensure candidates are familiar with all the format and structure requirements (outlined in the Guidance for Delivery) of the following types of document: a narrative; instructions; a report; an explanation; a letter; an email.

4. Candidates should be taught about register and appropriate word choice for the various document types listed above.

5. Centres should refer to the lists of words provide at Entry Levels 1-3 of Functional Skills English and use these to inform their teaching of the spelling requirements at Level 1.

6. Candidates should be encouraged to proof-read their work, checking for errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar as well as the composition elements, such as coherence, register, structure and format, and paragraphing.

7. Some candidates' responses were significantly longer than the indicated word count or document length. For many candidates, the likelihood of more errors occurring is increased, and the overall effectiveness and functionality of the piece may also be compromised.

8. Centres are reminded that dictionaries and spellcheckers are no longer permissible.

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Chief Examiner

Date: March 2020