

3748-111 and 3748-311

**Functional Skills English Level 1
Writing**

Chief Examiner's report – May 2016

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1 Introduction

The purpose of this document is to provide centres with feedback on the performance of candidates for 3748-111 and 3748-311 Functional Skills English Writing Level 1.

The Chief Examiner's Report has been reintroduced as a result of feedback from centres, to give them guidance in preparing candidates for examination.

2 Overall Performance

This report covers the period from February 2016 to May 2016. However, centres are strongly urged to review the previous Chief Examiner's report, dated January 2016, as the comments and advice still apply.

In general, candidates seem to engage well with the topics presented. Most candidates appear to have sufficient time to complete the two tasks, although it is apparent that some weaker candidates find the time constraints tight.

As a result of the review of Functional Skills undertaken by Ofqual, the pass marks for writing have risen slightly, meaning there is now more emphasis on the need for accuracy in spelling, punctuation and grammar.

Areas of good performance

Formatting and structuring responses are areas where candidates generally perform well. Typically, candidates are asked to write two of: a letter, an email, an article, a speech, or the text of a leaflet. Layout and structuring conventions associated with each type of document seem to be understood by the majority of candidates, although there tends to be some confusion about when to use *Yours faithfully* or *Yours sincerely*.

The inclusion of relevant detail seems to present few problems for most candidates. At level 1, candidates are provided with a bullet pointed list of detail that should be expanded upon in the writing, and successful candidates seem to have no trouble doing so.

Logical sequencing of responses is evident for most candidates, and for these candidates, it often follows that they are able to write with clarity and coherence.

Areas for development

1. Centres are strongly urged to read the previous Chief Examiner's report, dated January 2016, as the advice and guidance from that report is still applicable.
2. For weaker candidates, spelling, punctuation, grammar and language tend to be the areas where a significant number of marks are dropped. Proof-reading of responses is always advisable and centres are reminded that candidates should have access to dictionaries.
3. Irrespective of the type of document candidates are asked to write, punctuation is required. Some candidates seem to be under the impression that punctuation is optional in emails, especially when using the first person personal pronoun.
4. At level 1, candidates should be secure in their knowledge of the correct use of full stops, upper and lower case letters, and question marks. Capital letters should be used at the start of a sentence, for proper nouns and in postcodes.

5. Grammar errors are frequent for some weaker candidates whose writing styles are similar to informal speech. Candidates should be made aware that all documents they are asked to write are formal, and should, therefore, be grammatically correct.
6. Candidates should aim to write between 200 and 250 words per response. Responses that contain fewer than 130 words are penalised across all categories.

3 Recommendations/Advice for centres

1. Review previous Chief Examiner's report, dated January 2016.
2. Candidates should be entered only after a significant period of learning has taken place. Making use of the sample assessments and the worked examples available on the City & Guilds website is important, and allows centres to be able to judge a candidate's exam preparation.
3. Candidates should be fully conversant with the formatting and structural requirements of letters, emails, speeches, articles and text in leaflets. Centres should review the Functional Skills English Guidance for Centres document, available on the City & Guilds website, as this provides invaluable guidance on the requirements and also contains useful sample teaching activities.
4. Candidates who handwrite their responses should be reminded of the importance of the correct formation of individual letters so text is as legible as possible and that they are unequivocally upper or lower case, as determined by what is being written. Although legibility per se is not marked, illegibility can affect marks awarded across several categories. To this end, centres should ensure that candidates are entered for the platform which will maximise their chances of success.
5. Encourage candidates to proofread their work.

4 Additional Information

Centres that enter candidates for the paper-based version of the exam should be aware that candidates can word process their responses and can may make use of the inherent spelling and grammar checking facilities.

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