

**3748-114 and 3748-314**

**Functional Skills English Level 2  
Writing**

**Chief Examiner's report – January 2018**

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# 1 Introduction

The purpose of this document is to provide centres with feedback on the performance of candidates for 3748-114 and 3748-314 Functional Skills English Writing Level 2.

## 2 Overall Performance

This report covers the period from February 2017 to January 2018. However, centres are strongly urged to review the previous Chief Examiner's reports as the comments and advice still apply.

The scenarios presented across the bank of exam papers seemed to allow most candidates to engage with the tasks and to present responses that indicated a good understanding of the information required and the types of document in which it was to be presented.

Whilst performance varied across candidates and centres, those who passed were generally able to demonstrate sound understanding and performance across at least two of spelling, punctuation and grammar.

A significant number of candidates did not pass the exam. Some candidates were only one or two marks away from achieving sufficient marks to pass, and may well have done so through more detailed and careful proof reading of responses. Other candidates, however, performed significantly below the levels required for level 2, and it was apparent that they had been entered into the exam before being ready. Typically, these candidates demonstrated poor skills in at least two of spelling, punctuation and grammar, and often displayed significant weaknesses in their use of language.

### Areas of good performance

Writing concisely, in a logical sequence, and including all the relevant information posed few problems for most candidates. In addition, improvements could be seen in the formatting and structuring of documents.

Successful candidates were also strong in at least two of spelling, punctuation or grammar. Weak performance across all three means candidates are unlikely to accumulate sufficient marks to pass the exam.

### Areas for development

1. Centres are strongly urged to read all previous Chief Examiner's reports, as the advice and guidance is still applicable.
2. Punctuation was an area that caused the loss of significant marks for weaker candidates. In particular, errors in the use of commas and apostrophes were common. However, lower level errors, such as a lowercase letter for the first person personal pronoun, were also evident.
3. On occasion, some candidates would write entire responses in block capitals, resulting in the loss of significant marks for punctuation. Centres are reminded that the correct use of upper and lowercase letters is a requirement at Entry 2, and that all lower levels of Functional Skills English are subsumed into the levels above.
4. Centres are reminded that punctuation is required in all responses, irrespective of the task or audience.

5. Spelling errors were typical of weaker candidates. Some of the words commonly misspelt were: a lot; writing; information; sincerely; faithfully; apart / a part; as well; truly; business; February; library; disappointment; success; campaign.
6. Poor grammar often led to deduction of marks in other areas, such as clarity, concise writing, and use of language.
7. There is also a tendency for weaker candidates to make errors in subject-verb agreement, or verb-tense agreement. For example, it is not uncommon to see *We was*, or *I were*. Another common error for weaker candidates is the incorrect use of the preposition *of* where the verb *have* should be used. For example, *I could of given the money to charity*.
8. Candidates should aim to write between 250 and 300 words per response. Responses that contain fewer than 130 words are penalised across all categories.
9. Some candidates write very long responses, seemingly ignoring the instruction to write between 250 and 300 words. Except for very able candidates, the likelihood of more errors occurring is increased in longer documents. Although some compensation in the marking is given to longer documents, it is in the interests of candidates to plan and structure their responses so that all the relevant detail is contained within the suggested word count.

### 3 Recommendations/Advice for centres

1. Review Chief Examiner's previous reports.
2. Practice papers and worked examples are available on the City & Guilds website. Centres should make use of these in their preparation of candidates.
3. The Functional Skills English Guidance for Delivery document, available on the City & Guilds website, provides valuable guidance on the requirements of Level 2 Functional Skills English, and also contains useful sample teaching activities.
4. Level 2 papers no longer contain bullet pointed lists of detail to expand upon. Instead, the detail required is contained in the scenario or the source documents that need to be read for each question. Candidates should read these carefully to determine what should be covered.
5. At level 2, candidates will be asked to write two different types of document. Candidates should be familiar with the inherent structural requirements of formal letters, emails, reports, articles and speeches.
6. Functional Skills English exams are available in either a paper-based version or an on-line version. If centres select the paper-based route, candidates are still permitted to word process their responses. If candidates handwrite their responses, it is important that the text is legible, and that the formation of upper and lowercase letters is unequivocal.
7. For candidates or centres opting for the paper-based route, the source documents are provided in booklet form. For those opting to use the Evolve onscreen route, there is the necessity to scroll between source documents at level 2, and it is wise for centres to provide candidates with blank paper and a pen that will allow them to take notes from the source material when required.
8. Encourage candidates to proof read their work.
9. Centres are reminded that there is no marking compensation awarded to candidates for whom English is a second language.

## 4 Additional Information

Revised standards are currently being developed, and the expectation is that assessment against the new standards will commence in September 2019. There will be a period of time where assessment against the current standards will run concurrently with assessment against the new standards.

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