

3748-113 and 3748-313

**Functional Skills English Level
2 Reading**

Chief Examiner's report – August 2016

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City & Guilds

1 Giltspur Street

London EC1A 9DD

www.cityandguilds.com

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1 Introduction

The purpose of this document is to provide centres with feedback on the performance of candidates for 3748-113 and 3748-313 Functional Skills English Reading Level 2.

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 June 2016 to August 2016. However, centres are strongly urged to review the previous Chief Examiner's report, dated May 2016, as the comments and advice still apply.

Pass rates have remained steady over the last three months. Many candidates are successful, although a significant number are failing due to the following main reasons:

1. Being entered for the exam before adequate and sufficient learning has taken place.
2. Unfamiliarity with the type of questions being asked.
3. Careless reading of the questions.
4. Entering insufficient responses.

Areas of good performance

Many candidates achieve high marks, and a common thread for all these candidates is a familiarity with the types of questions being asked.

All current Level 2 papers will ask candidates to compare and/or contrast information about the same topic in two different source documents. Stronger candidates go beyond simply listing information in the documents and explicitly compare and/or contrast the information, thus gaining extra marks.

All papers will ask candidates to identify bias in a document and to identify how language has been used in order to enhance the message being put across by the author. Although the wording of the questions may differ slightly from paper to paper, the skills being tested remain the same. Stronger candidates are already familiar with and rehearsed in answering these types of questions, and therefore gain significant marks.

In general, most candidates performed well against 2.2.1 - *Select and use different types of texts to obtain and utilise relevant information* and 2.2.2 - *Read and summarise, succinctly, information/ideas from different sources*.

Areas for development

The three assessment criteria that prove most problematic for weaker candidates are:

- 2.2.3 (b) Comment on how meaning is conveyed through language and layout.
- 2.2.4 Detect point of view, implicit meaning and/or bias
- 2.2.5 Analyse texts in relation to audience needs and consider suitable responses

1. 2.2.3 (b) Comment on how meaning is conveyed through language and layout.

Candidates should ensure they read the question carefully to determine whether it is language techniques or layout techniques that are being asked about. If it is language techniques, citing the use of a headline or a subheading, for example, will receive no marks, as they are layout features.

Typical language techniques that candidates should know about at level 2 include the use of humour, persuasion, alliteration, repetition, rhetorical questioning, bias, imperative phrases, amongst others. A more complete list can be found in the Guidance for Centres document, available on the City & Guilds website.

Candidates often lose marks through providing examples of layout techniques, such as bold, or headings, when it is language techniques that are being asked about. A greater emphasis is put on language techniques at level 2.

In addition, candidates should also determine whether the question asks for an example of the technique being used or whether an explanation of why the technique is effective is required. Providing an explanation when it is an example that is being asked for (and vice versa) means losing marks.

2. 2.2.4 Detect point of view, implicit meaning and/or bias

In particular, it is the identification of bias that causes problems for weaker candidates. Some candidates appear to have been wholly unprepared in the skill of detecting bias within a source document. It is essential that candidates are exposed to biased writing in their preparation for the exam.

3. 2.2.5 Analyse texts in relation to audience needs and consider suitable responses

Weaker candidates are rarely awarded full marks against this assessment criterion. Typical questions may ask a candidate to identify information that is repeated in two documents, or may ask candidates to compare and/or contrast information from two sources.

If the instruction is to compare or contrast, examiners are looking for explicit comparison or contrasting, most easily evidenced by the use of discourse markers such as *in contrast to document a), whereas,, similarly, both documents, on the one hand, etc.*

3 Recommendations/Advice for centres

1. Centres should review all previous Chief Examiner reports, as the advice and guidance still applies.
2. Centres should make use of the Guidance for Centres document, available on the City & Guilds website. The document provides further detail about types of questions, what examiners are looking for in responses, typical Level 2 skills and knowledge a candidate should have, and sample teaching activities.
3. Candidates should not be entered into the exam before adequate learning and practice has taken place.
4. Familiarity with the question types is essential.
5. Candidates should explicitly compare and/or contrast information from source documents, going beyond merely listing the information contained in the documents.
6. Candidates should always take note of the number of marks available for each question. If a question asks the candidate to identify biased phrases, for example, and there are five marks available, candidates should look for five biased phrases.
7. Spelling, punctuation and grammar are not tested in the examination, and there is no requirement for candidates to write in complete sentences.
8. As part of the learning process, candidates should be exposed to all types of source documents, including web-sites, articles, business reports, formal letters and emails, leaflets, promotional material and advertising, amongst others. These should be studied in combination with the Functional Skills English Reading Level 2 criteria, with a view to candidates being able to:
 - 2.2.1 Select and use different types of texts to obtain and utilise relevant information
 - 2.2.2 Read and summarise, succinctly, information/ideas from different sources
 - 2.2.3 (a) Identify the purposes of texts and
(b) comment on how meaning is conveyed through language and layout.
 - 2.2.4 Detect point of view, implicit meaning and/or bias
 - 2.2.5 Analyse texts in relation to audience needs and consider suitable responses where applicable

4 Additional Information

From September 2016, an additional 10 minutes will be allowed for the Functional Skills English Level 2 Reading examination. The total time allowed for a candidate will be 70 minutes.

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EC1A 9DD
www.cityandguilds.com**

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