

3748-113 and 3748-313

Functional Skills English Level 2 Reading

Chief Examiner's report – February 2017

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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.

2 Overall Performance

This report covers the period from August 2016 to February 2017. However, centres are strongly urged to review the previous Chief Examiner's report, dated May 2016 and August 2016, as the comments and advice still apply.

Whilst many candidates are successful, a significant number are failing. The principal reasons remain the same:

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

Successful candidates generally gain marks across all five of the assessment criteria.

It was evident that stronger candidates had a clear understanding of what was being asked of them, suggesting that good teaching and adequate preparation of candidates had taken place prior to the summative assessment.

In particular, strong candidates were able to identify several language techniques in the source documents that had been deliberately chosen by the authors in order to communicate more effectively with the readers (2.2.3).

Identifying bias within a source document (2.2.4) is tested in every paper, and successful candidates could do this very well. Similarly, summarising information from different sources (2.2.2), and analysing texts in relation to audience needs (2.2.5) were also well addressed by many candidates.

Areas for development

The principal areas for development remain the same, and centres are urged to review the previous Chief Examiner's reports.

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

Weaker candidates often have difficulty when answering questions addressing this aspect of the standards, either through lack of preparation, unfamiliarity with what is being asked, or failing to read the questions properly.

Candidates should determine whether the question is asking for language techniques or layout techniques. Teaching and preparation should aim to ensure that candidates have a clear understanding of the differences between language and layout.

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

Whilst an improvement can be seen in the overall responses to questions addressing this criterion, weaker candidates often lose significant marks when asked to identify biased aspects of the writing in the source documents.

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

A typical question will ask candidates to compare and/or contrast information from different sources. Stronger candidates go beyond a mere listing of the information in each document and draw out similarities and differences, referencing one document against the other.

Examiners are asked to look for explicit instances of comparing or contrasting of information, and this is most easily evidenced by candidates through discourse markers in the candidate's responses. For example, a typical response would make use of certain words that demonstrate an understanding of the requirement to compare or contrast information, such as *whereas, on the one hand, in contrast, however, but, neither, both, 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 Delivery 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 for the exam before adequate learning and practice has taken place.
4. Familiarity with the question types is essential. Making use of the practice papers and the worked examples on the City & Guilds website is strongly recommended.
5. Most questions explicitly tell the candidate how many responses are required. Where this is not the case, candidates should always take note of the number of marks available for the 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.
6. 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 has been allocated to the Functional Skills English Level 2 Reading examination. The total time allowed for a candidate will be 70 minutes.

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