

3748-113 and 3748-313

**Functional Skills English Level 2
Reading**

Chief Examiner's report – May 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 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.

As would be expected, increased familiarity with the new model of assessment papers has led to a rise in the pass rates. However, significant numbers of candidates are not passing the exam, and the principal reasons remain the same:

1. entering candidates prior to completion of adequate learning
2. unfamiliarity with key level 2 standards
3. failing to enter the required number of responses
4. misreading questions and/or not understanding what is being asked.

A marked improvement has been seen in the responses to some questions which were previously proving problematic. Under the new model, candidates are often asked to compare and contrast information from two different sources. Candidates achieving the highest marks for this question explicitly compare and/or contrast the information using discourse markers, as opposed to merely 'listing' the information from each source.

Areas of good performance

Successful candidates generally demonstrated good knowledge across the five assessment criteria. In particular, stronger candidates were able to identify various language techniques employed in the source documents without problem (2.2.3), and identify biased phrases (2.2.4), thus gaining a significant number of 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

For candidates who failed the exam, a typical fault was to not be able to identify biased phrases within a document. This is tested in every exam paper, although the question itself may be worded differently from paper to paper.

Each paper also tests a candidate's abilities to identify features of language used by an author in order to more effectively convey the meaning to the intended audience. The more common techniques evident in source documents may include questioning, hyperbole, bias, repetition, alliteration, humour, persuasion and direct address to the reader, amongst others. It is important that candidates are able to identify the techniques when they occur and to provide the actual examples from the text, if required by the question. More advanced candidates may well be able to identify other, less common features of language in a text, such as onomatopoeia, for example; although centres are advised to concentrate their teaching on those techniques discussed in the Adult Literacy Core Curriculum, they should rest assured that candidates will be awarded appropriate marks as and when more advanced techniques are identified.

If a question asks candidates to use two of the source documents in their response, it will be impossible to obtain full marks through using only one of the source documents; indeed, if the candidate is specifically being asked to compare and/or contrast information from two documents, the use of only one source document in the response would mean that no comparing and/or contrasting is taking place, so zero marks would be awarded.

3 Recommendations/Advice for centres

1. Centres are strongly advised to read the previous Chief Examiner's report, available on the City & Guilds website.
2. Make use of the Guidance for Centres document, available on the City and Guilds website. The guidance document includes a section on typical teaching activities that will help prepare candidates for the exam.
3. Due to inherent restrictions of a screen-based examination, candidates would benefit from having a blank sheet of paper and a pen or pencil to be able to make notes, particularly when responses involve looking at two different reading sources.
4. Candidates should not be entered for the exam until an adequate period of learning has been undertaken and they have successfully passed the practice papers available on the City & Guilds website.
5. Candidates should be exposed to many different types of document throughout their learning, including those containing bias and various language techniques.
6. Candidates should be familiar with explicitly comparing and/or contrasting information from two different sources; merely listing the information from each source is insufficient.
7. Responses are to be found in the source documents. If candidates are asked to provide phrases which mean the same as a phrase in the question, the answers will always be in the source documents, and should not be taken from the candidate's own knowledge or experience.
8. When a question asks a candidate to make use of two source documents, the use of only one source document will result in reduced marks or, in the case of a compare and/or contrast type question, zero marks.
9. Whilst some questions will specify how many responses are required, candidates should be aware that, in the absence of this information, the number of responses required is generally indicated by the number of marks available for that particular question.
10. 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

Centres should be aware that pass marks may vary from paper to paper as a result of an awarding process undertaken by City & Guilds. Any difference in pass marks reflects the perceived and actual difference in demand of the exam papers, including the source materials and the questions themselves. Therefore, it is possible that two candidates with the same score may have different overall results (pass or fail) if they sat different papers.

Spelling, punctuation and grammar are not tested in the exam. In addition, there is no need for candidates to write in complete sentences. Copying out the stem of a question in a response is to be discouraged as it merely wastes a candidate's time.

City & Guilds were asked to adopt a non-formulaic approach to questions in reading papers. Prior to OFQUAL's review, all level 2 papers contained at least one question that was identical in every paper. Questions in the current papers are not repeated from one paper to the next, although the assessment criteria being tested remain the same.

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1 Giltspur Street
London
EC1A 9DD
www.cityandguilds.com

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