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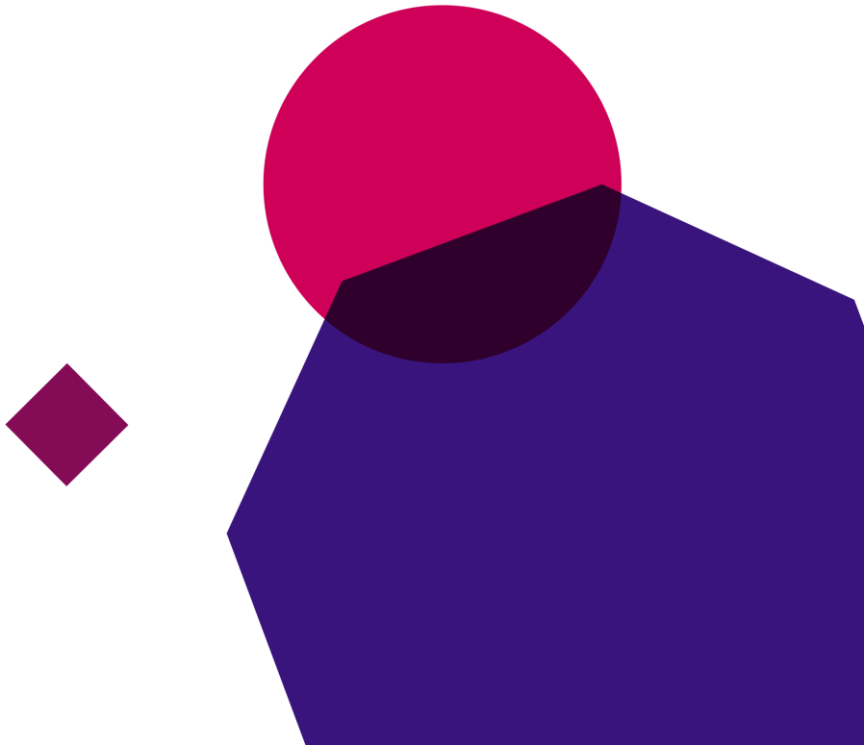
Chief Examiner's Report

Functional Skills English Reading Level 1 (4748)

4748-110 (e-volve)
4748-210 (paper-based)

May 2021



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1. Introduction

The purpose of this document is to provide centres with feedback on the performance of candidates for 4748-110 and 4748-210 Functional Skills English Reading Level 1. This report covers the period from April 2020 to April 2021.

Please note: the report does not cover the period during which Centre Assessed Grades (CAG) were certificated.

2. Overall Performance

This report covers the period from April 2020 to April 2021.

Pass rates were high, and the majority of candidates who passed were able to demonstrate a good level of achievement across all the Subject Content Statements.

The Subject Content Statements that addressed skills not previously addressed in the legacy qualification (3748-110 and 3748-210) did not seem to pose too many problems for the majority of candidates, although it was evident that a significant proportion of candidates were entered prior to adequate preparation having taken place.

All the different versions of the exam require candidates to read two source documents. The source documents appeared to be accessible and sufficiently engaging for most candidates and enabled candidates to answer the questions correctly most of the time.

At least two questions in all versions require candidates to compare or comment upon information in both documents. These questions seemed to be the most demanding, with a significant number of candidates dropping marks.

Some poor exam technique was evident. On occasion, it appeared candidates did not read the questions carefully enough or did not submit sufficient responses. Multiple-choice questions sometimes indicated that two or more answers were required; weaker candidates often selected only one option.

The available time to complete the exam seemed to be sufficient to allow most candidates to answer each question, although a small proportion entered no responses into some of the later questions, suggesting they had run out of time.

3. Areas for development

1. Questions should be read very carefully.

It is imperative that candidates read the questions carefully. On occasion, candidates' responses would suggest that questions had either been misunderstood or simply misread.

Many questions will include instructions to look at specific parts of the source documents. For example, a question may well begin with the statement: *Look at paragraph 3 of Document 1*…, or something similar. If responses are taken from elsewhere in the source document, candidates are unlikely to receive any marks. Where questions do not specify a paragraph(s) to look at, candidates should read the whole document and take answers from the appropriate places.

2. Take note of the number of responses required.

Questions will generally indicate how many responses are required. A significant number of candidates entered insufficient responses, therefore negating the possibility of receiving full marks for the question. This applies to multiple-choice questions and open questions.

3. Subject Content Statement 10: *Compare information, ideas and opinions in different texts.*

At no stage in the legacy qualification (3748) were candidates asked to compare information across two source documents. As this is a requirement in the reformed qualification, it is essential that candidates are rehearsed in this skill and know what types of question to expect, before being entered into the exam.

Candidates may be asked to find areas of agreement or disagreement between the two documents, to provide a contrasting statement from one document to a given statement from the other document, or whether a particular subject is covered in only one or both documents, for example. The questions themselves may be multiple-choice format or open format.

In order to access full marks for an open question, a candidate must explicitly compare and/or contrast the information. Simply listing the information from both documents, without an explicit attempt to compare or contrast (as demanded by the question), will not allow the candidate to obtain full marks.

4. Subject Content Statement 11: *Identify meanings in texts and distinguish between fact and opinion.*

This particular Subject Content Statement was not tested in the legacy qualification (3748), so it is not surprising that some candidates are dropping marks in this category. As coverage of the Subject Content Statements in all papers is 100%, it is guaranteed that candidates will be asked to differentiate between fact and opinion at some stage during the exam. They will usually be directed to look at a specific paragraph and asked to identify both facts and opinions, or only facts, or only opinions.

Some candidates, when asked to identify an opinion(s) from a specific paragraph, responded with their own opinion on the topic; this is not what is being asked. Candidates should be identifying a phrase or sentence from the paragraph that is an opinion (even if presented a fact).

5. *Subject Content Statement 12: Recognise that language and other textual features can be varied to suit different audiences and purposes.*

Once again, this skill area was not tested in the legacy qualification, so it is important candidates are adequately prepared for questions that address this Subject Content Statement.

Candidates must be able to judge the purpose of a text (to persuade, to explain, to promote, to instruct, to describe, etc) and to be able to identify the likely audience for the text. Based on this knowledge, they are expected to be able to identify how language and other textual features have been used and varied to effectively communicate the information in the texts.

For example, if the purpose of a text is to persuade, the language may include short sentences and imperatives, such as '*Get yours Now!'.* If the purpose is to instruct, language may contain bullet pointed lists of short commands, or a diagram may be included.

6. Subject Content Statement 13: *Use reference materials and appropriate strategies (e.g. using knowledge of different word types) for a range of purposes, including to find the meaning of words.*

Subject Content Statement 13 was not previously assessed in the legacy qualification (3748) and has posed a few problems for some candidates. The nature and format of the questions assessing this aspect of the standards will vary from paper to paper, but, in general, the source document will contain some additional information in the form of a table, a chart, a footnote, or another similar device that provides information not specifically mentioned in the body of the text. Questions are designed to require candidates to answer using this additional information.

7. Subject Content Statement 14: *Understand organisational and structural features and use them to locate relevant information (e.g. index, menus, subheadings, paragraphs) in a range of straightforward texts.*

Candidates need to be taught to recognise how organisational and structural elements within a text aid the reader to access and understand the text and to locate specific, additional information. For example, paragraphs donate a change in topic and help to split up the text to make it more accessible to the reader. Subheadings are used to pre-empt or summarise the information below the subheading. Asterisks and superscript numerals are instructions to a reader to look elsewhere in the text for additional information. A typical question might ask for a piece of information that can be found through recognising the correct subheading, following an asterisk or superscript numeral, reading a caption or using some other organisational or structural feature.

8. Subject Content Statement 15: *Infer from images meanings not explicit in the accompanying text.*

On occasion, it was apparent that candidates were not using the image to find information, despite the instruction to do so in the question.

9. Subject Content Statement 17: *Read and understand a range of specialist words in context.*

Unlike the legacy qualification, the current iteration requires candidates to identify specialist words through clues given in the surrounding text and/or the context in which the word is used. It is always possible to deduce the meaning of the word through a careful reading of the text. Candidates may be asked the specific meaning of the specialist word, or alternatively, to identify which specialist word has been used is paraphrased in the question. The question could be either a multiple-choice question or an open question.

10. Subject Content Statement 18: *Use knowledge of punctuation to aid understanding of straightforward texts.*

Candidates should know and understand the roles of common punctuation marks, including commas, exclamation marks, speech marks, inverted commas, brackets, dashes, capital letters, question marks, and so on. A typical question may ask a candidate to identify which punctuation mark has been used to show a quotation, to indicate additional information, or to separate items in a list, for example. Alternatively, they may be asked why a particular punctuation mark has been used. Once again, the questions may be multiple-choice or open questions.

4. Advice for centres

1. Candidates should only be entered into the exam once sufficient learning has taken place. In order to maximise the chances of success, candidates should have previously made use of sample papers and model answers, as these will not only give an indication of their progress but will also ensure they are familiar with the types of question that may be asked.

2. A Guidance for Delivery document is available on the City & Guilds website. This is essential reading for all tutors or other support staff involved in the delivery of Functional Skills English, as it provides further detail about the Subject Content Statements, examples of the types of questions that may be asked and sample teaching activities.

3. Spelling, punctuation and grammar are not tested in the examination, and there is no requirement for candidates to write in complete sentences, nor to repeat the stem of the question in the response.

4. Centres are strongly urged to refer to the previous Chief Examiner's Report dated March 2020, as the information and advice contained within the report are still applicable.

Oliver Jobes
Chief Examiner

Date: May 2021