Chief Examiner's Report

Functional Skills English Reading

Level 2 (4748)

4748-113 (e-volve)

4748-213 (paper-based)

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1. Introduction

The purpose of this document is to provide centres with feedback on the performance of candidates for 4748-113 and 4748-213 Functional Skills English Reading Level 2. This report covers the period from February 2023 and August 2023.

2. Overall performance

This report covers the period from February 2023 and August 2023.

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

Time management does not appear to be an issue for most candidates, as very few papers appear to be incomplete.

Exam technique is occasionally an issue for all candidates, although more so for weaker candidates. Issues include not reading the questions carefully enough, not noting the number of responses required, selecting too few or too many answers in multiple-choice questions, and not following directions to take answers from specific parts of the source documents.

For successful candidates, no single Subject Content Statement (SCS) stands out as being particularly problematic. However, some consistencies can be seen across weaker candidates' papers. These include failure to fully and explicitly compare and/or contrast information from the two source documents (SCS 12), difficulties when distinguishing between fact and opinion (SCS 18), difficulties when asked to identify bias or recognise specific vocabulary choices to suit intended purpose and audience (SCS 17) and difficulties when identifying different language techniques employed by authors to effectively convey meaning (SCS 14).

The overall performance suggests that candidates engage well with the source documents and have completed comprehensive learning programmes that include familiarisation with both the Subject Content Statements and the types and styles of questions that they are likely to be presented with prior to being entered for the exam. However, this is not universal, and it is apparent that some candidates are entered before the necessary learning and familiarisation has taken place.

3. Areas for development

1. It is important to read the questions carefully.

   Some questions will direct candidates to look at specific parts of the source documents. For example, a question might read: *Identify two biased phrases in the second paragraph of Document 1*. In order to achieve any marks, responses must come from the relevant part of the document(s). This can apply to questions addressing any and all of the Subject Content Statements, so it is imperative that candidates take note of instructions in the questions at all times. If a question directs candidates to look at a specific part(s) of the text(s), answers taken from elsewhere are unlikely to receive any marks.

2. Questions will indicate how many responses are required.

   On occasions, candidates enter too few responses. Careful reading of the questions should ensure candidates know how many responses are required. Multiple-choice questions will always indicate the number of selections required, and this can vary between 1 and 4, so once again it is imperative that candidates pay particular attention to the directions in the questions.

   Similarly, if a question asks candidates for **one** response, candidates should write only one response. If the question asks for **two** responses, candidates should write down two responses and no more. If more than the required number of responses are written down, the examiners will mark only the first one or two responses, as dictated by the question, or on other occasions, if stipulated in the mark scheme, award zero marks.

3. Words or phrase questions

   Candidates should also take note of the wording in questions regarding the requirement to write down a word or a phrase. If a single word is asked for, candidates should write only one word. If a phrase is asked for, candidates should write the appropriate phrase, not the entire sentence the phrase comes from. The examiner needs to have confidence that the candidate has demonstrated the appropriate skill through being able to pick out the salient word or phrase.

4. Subject Content Statement 12: *Compare information, ideas and opinions in different texts, including how they are conveyed.*

   Typical questions will ask candidates to compare what each source document says about certain information, a particular idea or an opinion. Critical to attaining full marks for this type of question is being explicit when comparing or contrasting, most easily done through using simple discourse markers. Merely stating that Document 1 says one thing and Document 2 says another, without any explicit comparing or contrasting, will result in the candidate dropping marks. Candidates should be taught about the use of discourse markers, some of the more common ones being *however, in contrast, similarly, both documents, but*, etc.

   It is also important that candidates carefully read what it is that they are expected to compare or contrast. Candidates may be directed to particular paragraphs, titles, subheadings or specific phrases. Failure to refer to the correct part of the source documents will result in the loss of all marks for that question.

   At times, the questions will focus more on how information ideas and/or opinions are conveyed in different documents. A typical question will ask candidates to consider the language choices across the two documents, drawing out similarities or differences.

5. Subject Content Statement 14: *Understand the relationship between textual features and devices, and how they can be used to shape meaning for different audiences and purposes.*

   It is important that candidates are familiar with the many different textual features and devices that can be used to shape meaning. Papers will test a candidate's abilities to recognise the main purpose of a text, or specific language techniques used, eg, persuasive language, bias, critical language, humorous language, formal or informal language, emotive language, rhetorical questions, etc. Candidates should be able to recognise when language choices are made by authors and for what purposes.

   For example, a promotional source document will use techniques such as persuasive language or direct address to the reader, amongst many other possible techniques. Candidates should be exposed to many documents with different purposes and understand how language has been selected and adapted to meet the purpose. This area is problematic for some candidates, and responses are often left blank, or plausible techniques are listed but with incorrect examples provided from the source documents.

   Once again, it is important that candidates read the questions carefully, as they may be directed to look only at specific areas of the text.

6. Subject Content Statement 15: *Use a range of reference materials and appropriate resources (e.g. glossaries, legends/keys) for different purposes, including to find the meaning of words in straightforward and complex sources.*

   This area is generally well addressed, although it is apparent that weaker candidates do not always understand what is being asked, and how certain textual features can be used to direct readers to other areas of the text to find out further information, eg, asterisks, footnotes, captions, superscript reference numbers, icons. legends and keys.

7. Subject Content Statement 17: *Analyse texts, of different levels of complexity, recognising their use of vocabulary and identifying levels of formality and bias.*

   Recognising the use of vocabulary and identifying formality and bias in texts is tested in various ways. These include multiple-choice questions, asking candidates to identify formal or informal words or phrases, asking why a particular contributor may be biased, asking candidates to identify biased words or phrases, asking candidates to identify evidence of other tones and registers, eg sarcasm, persuasion, etc, or asking candidates to identify the overall register.

   It is important that candidates do not limit the study to only recognising formality and bias, as the Subject Content Statement also covers recognising the use of vocabulary in complex texts.

8. Subject Content Statement 18: *Follow an argument, identifying different points of view and distinguishing fact from opinion.*

   Candidates should be aware of how facts and opinions are presented, and how certain terms can render a phrase as an opinion. They should also be able to recognise that opinions are sometimes presented as facts, even though they are opinions.

   Candidates will never be asked to give their own opinion about a subject when this Subject Content Statement is being addressed. On occasion, candidates answer with their own opinion when a question is worded similarly to: *Give one opinion from the third paragraph in Document 2*, for example.

   When identifying either facts or opinions, it is important candidates do not write out too much text but limit themselves to the specific example of a fact or opinion. Examiners need to be confident that the candidate can meet the requirement, and writing out large sections of the text that contain both facts and opinions is likely to result in a loss of marks.

The other aspect of this Subject Content Statement is being able to follow an argument. Candidates should be aware that the arguments used to reach a conclusion may well appear before or after the said conclusion in the text.

9. Subject Content Statement 19: *Identify different styles of writing and writer's voice.*

Candidates should be familiar with the many different styles of writing and the voices that can be adopted by the writer. Some of the more common examples are formal, informal, critical, positive, negative, accusatory, comic, excited, persuasive, etc. This area is often addressed through multiple-choice questions, but not exclusively.

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. An updated 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 Reports, as the information and advice contained within the report are still applicable.

5. Learning should include sessions on exam technique. For example, candidates should know how to recognise the salient points of a question, how to interpret what is being asked, should understand how many responses are required, how many marks are allocated to the question, how to check responses for accuracy and sense, and how to manage time effectively.

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