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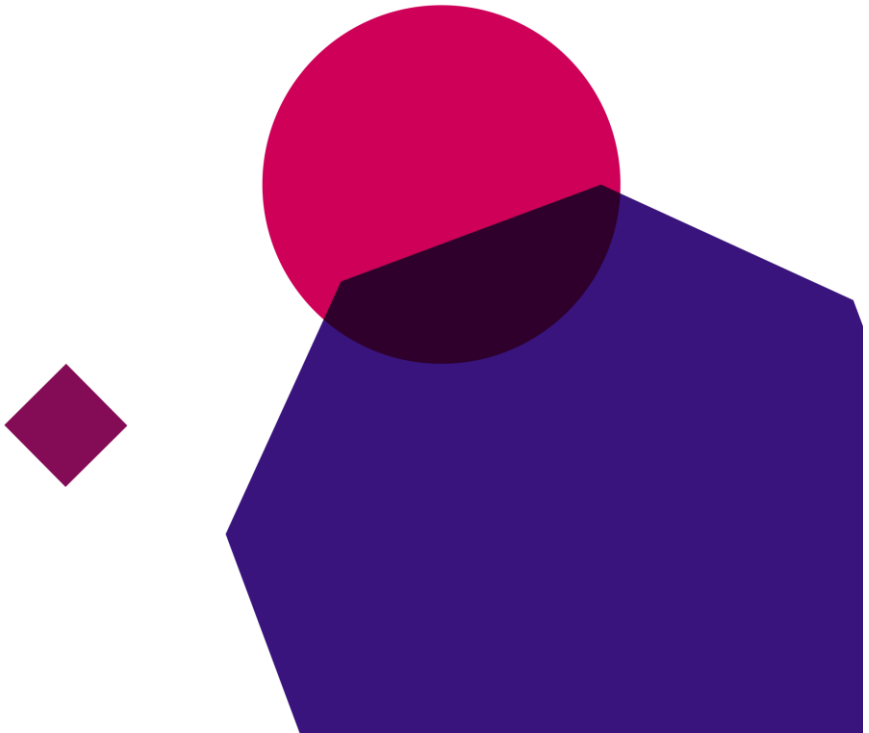
Chief Examiner's Report

Functional Skills English Writing Level 1 (4748)

4748-111 (e-volve)
4748-211 (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 4748-111 and 4748-211 Functional Skills English Writing Level 1. The examinations have been available since September 2019, and 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.

The majority of candidates accumulated sufficient marks to pass.

The relatively high pass rate suggests the majority of candidates were well prepared for the exam and were not entered until that preparation was complete. However, for some candidates it was evident that they were entered too early, as they did not have the necessary skills.

All versions of the exam consisted of two questions and required candidates to write two responses. Each response was required to be a different text type, with a different purpose and audience. Stronger candidates were able to adapt their writing accordingly, whereas weaker candidates were not always able to do so and often produced texts that differed little in terms of layout, language and register.

All topics seemed to be readily accessible for most candidates. Responses suggested a good level of engagement with the tasks and an ability to write sufficient detail to cover the salient detail.

Composition was generally well tackled. Weaker candidates were not always able to communicate their ideas and opinions clearly and coherently and may have demonstrated poor use of language and/or incorrect word choice. Often there was no differentiation between the two audiences being addressed, poor or totally absent paragraphing and incorrect application of format and structural requirements for the type of document being written.

The candidates that failed typically displayed weaknesses in at least two out of the three categories of spelling, punctuation and grammar, if not all three. As these categories account for approximately 45% of all available marks, it becomes difficult to pass without a solid understanding in at least two of these crucial areas.

The category where marks were most frequently dropped was punctuation. At level 1, candidates are now required to use commas in different circumstances (including when needed to separate clauses) and to use apostrophes for possession and omission. Both of these areas proved very problematic for most weaker candidates and a significant proportion of stronger candidates.

3. Areas for development

1. Format and Structure

   At level 1, candidates are asked to write two different text types. Those text types could be a narrative, a report, instructions, an explanation, a letter or an email. Candidates should be familiar with the format and structure requirements of each type of document, and centres are urged to review the requirements of each in the Guidance for Delivery document.

   When writing a narrative, a common trait amongst weaker candidates is to display inconsistency in tense selection, often moving from present tense to past tense within the same sentence when it is not appropriate to do so.

   A report seemed to pose problems for many candidates. Once again, centres are urged to review the Guidance for Delivery document. A report does not require any aspects of a letter to be included. Often candidates would start the report with *Dear Sir,* or something similar, and conclude with *Yours sincerely*. These are not appropriate in a report. Examiners are looking for a clear title to the report, followed by other structural elements such as subheadings, for example.

2. Punctuation

   Punctuation requirements at level 1 are greater than they were in the legacy qualification (3748). Candidates should now be familiar with the use of full stops, exclamation marks, commas, apostrophes (for possession and omission) and question marks.

   Centres are reminded that punctuation is required irrespective of the type of document being written. Responses devoid of punctuation, or with very minimal punctuation, may well suffer from a lack of clarity, and will be penalised accordingly.

3. Spelling

   Centres are reminded that Entry Levels 1-3 specify words that should be spelt correctly. Whilst no such lists exist for levels 1 and 2, the lower level requirements are subsumed into the higher levels and are indicative of the minimum levels of spelling that are required at the higher levels.

4. Language

   Candidates should understand the need to adapt register and word choice depending on the audience that is being addressed and the type of document being used. A set of instructions to a friend and a brief report of an accident should have different registers, yet it was apparent that weaker candidates were unable to differentiate or were simply not familiar with the language requirements of the different text types and audiences.

5. Coherence

   All papers provide a scenario that gives context to the text to be written. Candidates should write their responses as if the reader (the examiner) does not know that context. Some weaker candidates' responses assumed knowledge on behalf of the intended audience, whereas in reality the reader would be baffled by what they were reading.

6. Sufficiency

   A surprising number of candidates completed only one response. Each exam version requires the candidate to write two responses. As the pass marks are invariably above 50%, it is not possible to pass the exam through completing only one response.

   A suggested word count is provided for each question, and candidates should endeavour to write a response that is roughly the same length as the suggested word count. If a piece is unduly short, it will probably impact upon the functionality of the response and the marks awarded.

7. Proofreading

   Candidates should be encouraged to proofread their work, checking for errors in spelling, punctuation, grammar and the composition elements of the qualification, such as coherence, register, structure, format and paragraphing.

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 candidates' progress but will also ensure they are familiar with the types of scenarios that may be presented.

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 question that may be asked and sample teaching activities.

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

Oliver Jobes
Chief Examiner

Date: May 2021