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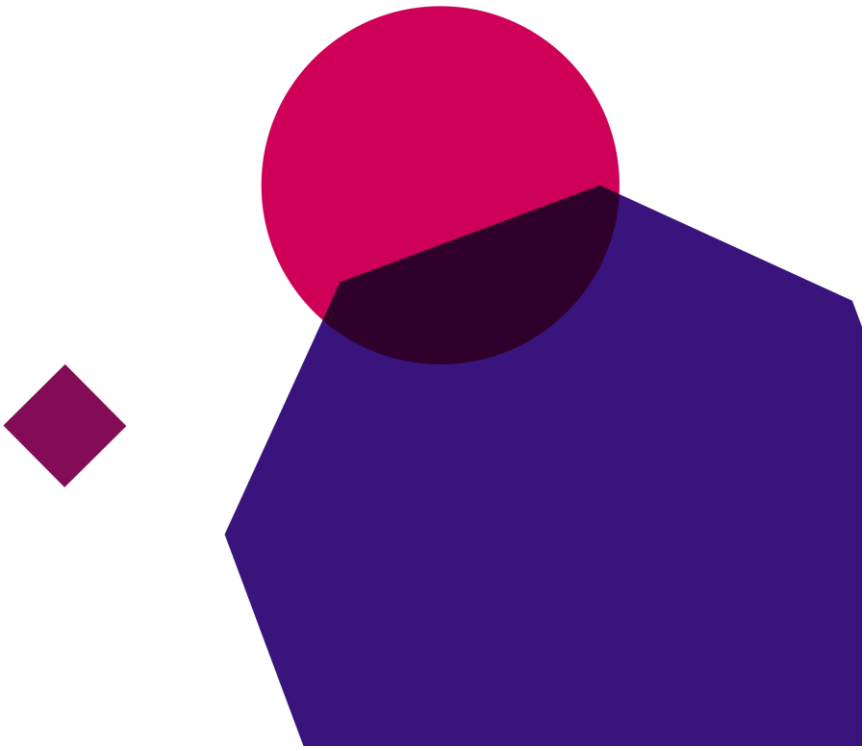
Chief Examiner's Report

Functional Skills English Writing Level 2 (4748)

4748-114 (e-volve)
4748-214 (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 4748-114 and 4748-214 Functional Skills English Writing Level 2. 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.

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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.

Exam papers consisted of two questions, requiring candidates to write two responses. Each question instructed candidates to write a particular document type aimed at a specified audience. Stronger candidates were able to adapt their writing accordingly, taking into account the intended audience and the purpose of the task. Weaker candidates often struggled to differentiate their writing between the two tasks and often produced texts that were similar in terms of layout, language and register.

Of the six document types, a narrative and a report seemed to pose the most problems for weaker candidates in terms of layout, although a significant number of candidates lost marks for format and structure irrespective of the document type. Paragraphing was generally well controlled, although it was not uncommon to see responses devoid of any attempts at paragraphing, especially where candidates also lost marks for format and structure.

Stronger candidates were able to present coherent and cohesive responses that addressed most, if not all, of the required detail, adapting their language well to support the purpose of the document. Some weaker candidates seemed to assume the intended recipient would have knowledge of the question, so provided no context as to why they were writing, thus presenting a response that lacked coherence and clarity.

The majority of candidates were able to complete the two tasks within the given time period, presenting responses that contained all the relevant detail. However, a few candidates failed to complete the two tasks in time and lost marks accordingly. The occasional candidate appeared to think that only one response was required.

In terms of spelling, punctuation and grammar, punctuation was the main area where significant marks were lost. Rules around comma usage seemed to confuse many candidates, especially when commas are required to separate clauses. It was not uncommon for weaker candidates to struggle in all three areas of spelling, punctuation and grammar.
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3. Areas for development

1. Format and Structure

   At level 2, candidates are asked to write two different text types. Those text types could be a narrative, a report, a blog, an article, a letter or an email. Candidates should be familiar with the format and structure requirements of each type of document, and centres are strongly 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. 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 blog aimed at fellow students and a brief report of an incident 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.

3. 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.

4. Number of responses required

   All exam papers contain two questions and require two responses. A surprising number of candidates entered only one response, and time available did not appear to be the factor influencing this.

5. Detail

   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 usually impact upon the functionality of the response and the marks awarded.

6. Punctuation

   Punctuation is an area where many candidates lost marks, particularly for incorrect use of commas. The standards now specify that candidates should be able to use punctuation that

goes beyond sentence demarcation, including using commas to separate clauses. In addition, candidates should be able to correctly use apostrophes for both possession and omission.

On occasion, candidates presented response devoid of punctuation. Candidates should be reminded that punctuation is required irrespective of the type of document being written, and that significant errors or a lack of punctuation can impact upon other categories of marking, such as clarity and coherence.

7. 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.

8. 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 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 scenario that may be presented 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