

**4800-011**

**Essential Skills Northern Ireland  
Communication Level 1**

**Chief Examiner's report – October 2018**

## **About City & Guilds**

As the UK's leading vocational education organisation, City & Guilds is leading the talent revolution by inspiring people to unlock their potential and develop their skills. City & Guilds is recognised and respected by employers across the world as a sign of quality and exceptional training.

## **City & Guilds Group**

The City & Guilds Group operates from three major hubs: London (servicing Europe, the Caribbean and Americas), Johannesburg (servicing Africa), and Singapore (servicing Asia, Australia and New Zealand). The Group also includes the Institute of Leadership & Management (management and leadership qualifications), City & Guilds Licence to Practice (land-based qualifications) and Learning Assistant (an online e-portfolio).

## **Copyright**

The content of this document is, unless otherwise indicated, © The City and Guilds of London Institute and may not be copied, reproduced or distributed without prior written consent. However, approved City & Guilds centres and candidates studying for City & Guilds qualifications may photocopy this document free of charge and/or include a PDF version of it on centre intranets on the following conditions:

centre staff may copy the material only for the purpose of teaching candidates working towards a City & Guilds qualification, or for internal administration purposes

candidates may copy the material only for their own use when working towards a City & Guilds qualification

**The Standard Copying Conditions (see the City & Guilds website) also apply.**

## **City & Guilds**

**1 Giltspur Street**

**London EC1A 9DD**

**[www.cityandguilds.com](http://www.cityandguilds.com)**

## Contents

<b>1</b>	<b>Introduction</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>Overall performance</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>Recommendations/Advice for centres</b>	<b>7</b>

## **1 Introduction**

The purpose of this document is to provide centres with feedback on the performance of candidates for 4800-011 Essential Skills Northern Ireland Communication Level 1.

## 2 Overall Performance

This report covers the period from September 2017 to September 2018. However, centres are encouraged to review previous Chief Examiner's reports, as the comments and advice still apply.

Many candidates are showing a strong performance in both reading and writing sections. Some candidates are continuing to struggle due to the following main reasons:

In the reading section:

1. Being entered for the exam before sufficient learning has taken place.
2. Not reading the questions properly.
3. Not reading source documents carefully enough to be able to provide detailed information.
4. Inability to engage with the source material to identify suitable responses (e.g. who can be contacted, what actions should be taken based on the information provided, etc).

In the writing section:

1. Poor use of spelling, punctuation and grammar.
2. Lack of adequate format and structure, or use of format and structure that is inappropriate for purpose and audience.
3. Poor use of language, including language that is inappropriate for purpose and audience.
4. Spending too much time on the first writing question, resulting in a rushed and much poorer response to the second question.

### Areas of good performance

In the reading section:

Successful candidates gained marks across all of the assessment criteria (a-d). They demonstrated good preparation and teaching, including a clear familiarity with the questions that might be asked and the types of responses expected. In particular, understanding main points and ideas and how these are presented in different source documents was a very strong area. Candidates also showed a good ability to answer questions that required more detailed reading of the text.

Successful candidates read questions carefully and noted the number of responses needed.

In the writing section:

Candidates continued to respond well to the scenarios and writing tasks, with many showing a particularly strong performance in the writing section. Successful candidates were able to write a logical, clear and coherent response that included all the relevant detail listed in the question. Strong candidates demonstrated a familiarity with the structure of different

documents, including letters, emails, speeches and articles, and were able to use language appropriate for purpose and audience.

A good command of at least two of spelling, punctuation and grammar was also present in stronger candidates' responses.

Overall:

Successful candidates answered most or all of the questions on the paper, suggesting good preparation and an ability to allocate enough time to each question and for checking.

### **Areas for development**

In the reading section:

#### 1. Familiarity with question types

It is essential to ensure that candidates are adequately prepared for the exam prior to being entered. Some weaker candidates did not appear to be familiar with the types of questions they may be asked. Making use of the practice assessments on the City & Guilds website is strongly recommended.

#### 2. Reading the question carefully

Many weaker candidates simply did not read questions properly. Marks are easily lost when candidates do not provide enough responses (the number required is always stipulated in the question) and/or when they do not provide relevant information in their answer. In both cases, careful reading of the question should address this, leading to a better performance.

#### 3. Reading the source documents carefully

Some weaker candidates struggled with questions addressing criterion b. These questions require a more detailed reading of source documents rather than skimming for information. There also may have been an expectation that all the answers would be contained in one section or within successive sentences of the source material. This is not always the case; answers are often spread throughout the document and may be located in subheadings, tabs, text boxes and other features that are not part of the main text.

It is important for candidates to learn and practice the ability to locate key information in a text by scanning and skimming the document, but also to recognise when they need to read documents in greater depth if more detailed information is required.

Teaching and preparation should ensure that candidates are familiar with the types of source documents they may encounter and the ways in which information is conveyed in them.

#### 4. Utilising information and identifying suitable responses (criteria c and d)

Weaker candidates often struggled with questions that addressed criteria c and d. These questions usually focus on what the reader can or should do in response to the information provided, who can be contacted and how, or how further information may be accessed. In other words, candidates should be able to understand how they can use a text as well as draw information from it.

#### 5. Open questions

Some questions cannot be answered by simply lifting information from the source documents. Weaker candidates struggled to answer questions where the answers were not directly stated in the source material but instead required engagement with or a response to the text. For example, candidates might be asked why a particular choice makes sense, or who would be a suitable person to contact from the options given in the source documents. Candidates should be prepared for this type of question.

In the writing section:

##### 1. Punctuation

Candidates should be aware that correct punctuation is required in all responses, even in speeches and informal emails.

Weaker candidates often misused or completely omitted full stops. Capital letters were also used incorrectly, including confusion over common and proper nouns. Candidates should also be instructed to take care with handwriting, as poorly formed letters may appear to be upper case when lower case is required, and vice versa.

##### 2. Grammar and language

Candidates for whom English is a second language often made a greater number of grammar and language errors, typically including omitted words, incorrect use of language, omitted or incorrect use of pronouns, omitted articles, incorrect subject-verb agreement and general lack of clarity.

##### 3. Format and structure, and language that is suitable for intended audience

This is an area that has seen significant improvement since the previous report, but still represents a problem for weaker candidates. These candidates gave responses that had little or no structure, or that were not structured appropriately for audience and purpose. It is important candidates are familiar with the correct format and structure of different documents, including letters, emails, speeches and articles. Candidates should understand how to present their responses in a structured, logical sequence, with a clear beginning, middle and conclusion where appropriate. It is also important that candidates use language that is suitable for purpose and audience; beginning a formal letter with 'Hi Dave', for example, is not appropriate.

##### 4. Writing too much or too little

There are two writing questions on the paper, one worth 6 marks and one worth 9 marks. Candidates should aim to write 80-120 words on the 'short' question and 120-140 words on the 'long' question. Responses that are too short are penalised across certain categories.

Many weaker candidates either did not provide a long enough response to demonstrate an ability to write well, or wrote too much and consequently ran out of time or made a greater number of errors. Very long answers tended to lose coherence. Very short answers did not provide adequate detail.

#### 5. Only answering one of the writing questions

Candidates who only answer one writing question cannot gain any marks on the unanswered question, and they are also penalised across spelling, punctuation and grammar. It is therefore extremely difficult to pass if only one writing question is attempted. Teaching and preparation should ensure that candidates can write two responses in the set amount of time. Candidates should be advised that if they are running out of time, a brief summary or bullet point answer is preferable to no answer at all. It is encouraging to see that more candidates are starting to take this approach when running out of time, as this sometimes means the difference between a pass and a fail.

#### 6. Common errors

Certain errors are still appearing more frequently; these include using 'of' instead of 'have' (e.g. should of, would of), 'collage' instead of 'college', common homophone errors (their/they're/there, to/too/two, here/hear, etc), and 'yous' or 'use' instead of 'you'. Candidates should be familiar with the proper use and spelling of common words. Weaker candidates also tended to misspell words used in the question itself.



### 3 Recommendations/Advice for centres

1. Candidates should not be entered for the exam before adequate learning and practice has taken place.
2. Familiarity with the question types is essential. Making use of the sample papers on the City & Guilds website is strongly recommended.
3. As the assessment contains both reading and writing sections and involves a substantial amount of reading of source documents and questions, practice and preparation should include time management techniques.
4. It is essential that candidates are taught to read all questions fully and consider what is being asked of them before attempting to answer. This may involve underlining important instructions on the question paper. Marks are easily lost due to not reading questions carefully.
5. In the reading section, candidates should be aware that they do not need to repeat the stem of the question in their answer.
6. Many candidates would strongly benefit from checking their finished responses in both the reading and writing sections.
7. As part of the learning process, candidates should be exposed to all types of source documents, including websites, articles, formal letters and emails, leaflets, promotional material and advertising, amongst others. Any of these may be encountered as source documents in the reading section.

---

**Published by City & Guilds  
1 Giltspur Street  
London  
EC1A 9DD  
[www.cityandguilds.com](http://www.cityandguilds.com)**

**City & Guilds is a registered charity  
established to promote education  
and training**

