

# Criteria for Functional Skills Qualifications



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## The criteria

### Introduction

1. The following criteria will be used as the basis for the development and accreditation of all functional skills qualifications.

### Content

#### Titling

2. Functional skills qualifications must be titled as follows.
  - 2.1 (Awarding organisation name) functional skills qualification in (English / Mathematics / Information and Communication Technology (ICT) at (Entry 1 / Entry 2 / Entry 3 / Level 1 / Level 2).

#### Subject matter of functional skills

3. Functional skills are the fundamental, applied skills in English, mathematics, and information and communication technology (ICT) which help people to gain the most from life, learning and work.
4. Functional skills qualifications are available in English, ICT and mathematics at the following levels: Entry 1, Entry 2, Entry 3, level 1 and level 2. Each qualification is separate and assessed independently. Functional skills subject criteria for English, mathematics and ICT specify the skills standards, coverage and range for the qualifications at each level.

### Assessment

5. Assessment must be consistent with the levels set out in the skills standards and with the associated coverage and range specified within the functional skills subject criteria. In addition, it must:
  - 5.1 provide realistic contexts, scenarios and problems;
  - 5.2 specify tasks that are relevant to the context;
  - 5.3 require application of knowledge, skills and understanding for a purpose;
  - 5.4 require problem solving;

- 5.5 assess process skills and the outcome of their application in different contexts.
6. The level of difficulty for Functional Skills assessment must be determined by the following interacting factors:
  - 6.1 the complexity of tasks/problems and the contexts within which they are embedded
  - 6.2 the technical demand of the content that might be applied in these contexts
  - 6.3 a learner's level of familiarity with the type of task/problem and context
  - 6.4 the level of independence required of the learner.
7. Assessment must be designed to assess a single level. The assessment must provide a reliable measure of proficiency at that level by providing significant evidence of meeting the requirements of the functional skills subject criteria at the specified level. The assessment must comply with the skill standards at a specific level and not include additional requirements.
8. Assessment at Entry level contains three sub-levels: Entry 1, Entry 2 and Entry 3. Assessment must be targeted at a specific sub-level. Awarding and certification should be available at the sub-levels.
9. Assessment must be entirely open response or predominantly open response. The functional skills subject criteria for English, mathematics and ICT specify the maximum proportion of fixed-response assessment permitted for the assessment of each qualification.
  - 9.1 Open response assessment is defined as task-based assessment based on real-life contexts that require learners to apply their skills, knowledge and understanding in order to resolve problem/s or produce effective outcome/s
  - 9.2 Open response assessment presents purposeful tasks and problems, embedded in realistic scenarios but does not prescribe the processes or the methods by which the learner responds
  - 9.3 Fixed response assessment is defined as assessment that presents items where the learner is confined to either a single or limited number of correct responses predetermined by the assessment, and where process is not explicitly credited.

- 9.4 Fixed response assessment must focus on the assessment of understanding and knowledge for a purpose.
10. In assessments, other than those relating to functional skills ICT qualifications, the inclusion of any ICT elements must not interfere with the assessment of the primary skill.
  11. In assessments, other than those relating to functional skills mathematics qualifications, the inclusion of any mathematical elements must not interfere with the assessment of the primary skill.
  12. In assessments, other than those relating to functional Skills English, the language used must be accessible to learners operating at least a level below the primary focus of assessment content.
  13. Assessment specifications and mark schemes must show how the assessments relate to the requirements of the functional skills subject criteria for English, mathematics and ICT.
  14. Assessment must be mark based, with the exception of the speaking, listening and communication component in English.
  15. Assessment must indicate the level of detail required and display the number of marks available per assessment item/task. Mark schemes must specify the performance evidence that is necessary to display the full range of marks.

#### **External and internal assessment**

16. Entry levels 1, 2 and 3 in English, mathematics and ICT, and levels 1 and 2 English in speaking, listening and communication, are assessed by controlled assessment and must comply with the functional skills controlled assessment requirements.
17. At Entry levels 1, 2 and 3, assessment must be externally specified by the awarding organisation and must be internally marked, except in the case of e-assessment where electronic marking is required. Assessments at the Entry levels can be internally contextualised and/or adapted according to the controlled assessment regulations.
18. At levels 1 and 2, assessment must be externally set by the awarding organisation and externally marked by the awarding organisation, with the exception of the speaking, listening and communication components of functional skills English.

## **Certification and Reporting**

19. Where a learner's performance is sufficient to meet the level requirements, a Functional Skills qualification pass certificate is awarded. No grades are issued for these qualifications.
20. In functional skills English, a formal statement of results must be available to learners and must report the level at which the qualification has been awarded as well as the level at which each of the assessment components has been achieved.
21. Functional skills qualification certificates must positively report the assessment component/s that has/have been passed to achieve the qualification.

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