



Department  
for Education

# **Subject content for digital Functional Skills qualifications**

**Government consultation response**

**October 2021**

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## Introduction

On 16 May 2019 the Department for Education published a consultation on the proposed subject content for digital Functional Skills qualifications. The consultation sought views on the following questions:

1. Does the proposed subject content cover the appropriate skills, knowledge and understanding for digital Functional Skills qualifications?
2. At entry level, does the proposed subject content support individuals to progress to study of digital skills at level 1?
3. At entry level and level 1, does the proposed subject content support progression to further vocational and technical study?
4. At entry level does the proposed subject content cover the key digital skills, knowledge and understanding needed to complete tasks for everyday life?
5. At level 1, does the proposed subject content cover the key digital skills, knowledge and understanding needed to complete tasks routinely required in the workplace and everyday life?
6. Does the proposed subject content have the potential to positively impact on specific groups, in particular the 'protected characteristic' groups?
7. Does the proposed subject content have the potential to negatively impact on specific groups, in particular the 'protected characteristic' groups? If so, how could this be reduced?

The consultation ran for eight weeks until 11 July 2019. It received 33 responses.

Of the responses we received for the consultation:

- 10 were submitted by providers (3 FE colleges and 7 private training providers);
- 7 were submitted by awarding organisations;
- 5 were submitted by respondents working in adult community learning;
- 4 were submitted on behalf of employers/business sectors;
- 3 were submitted by practitioners;
- 2 were submitted by respondents in other categories (membership organisations);
- 2 were submitted on behalf of higher education establishments.

The Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual) consulted separately on the design, delivery, awarding and maintenance of standards of digital FSQs.

## Overview of reform

Digital skills are as important to employability and participation in society as English and maths, yet, in 2021 an estimated one in five adults lack essential digital skills<sup>1</sup>.

To address this, in August 2020 the government introduced a legal entitlement to fully funded digital skills qualifications, alongside the existing English and maths entitlements. Adults with no or low digital skills now have the opportunity to undertake digital skills qualifications free of charge. The new entitlement helps providers to support adults at risk of being left behind in an increasingly digital world.

As set out in the government response to the consultation on improving adult basic digital skills<sup>2</sup>, published in April 2019, the digital entitlement fully funds qualifications at entry level and level 1. This is because, through our work with employers, providers and digital inclusion stakeholders, we concluded that level 1 provides the digital skills needed for adults to operate effectively in day-to-day life.

Alongside the new entitlement, the government is reforming basic digital skills qualifications to improve their quality and relevance, based on the national standards for essential digital skills<sup>3</sup>, published in April 2019. We have introduced new Essential Digital Skills qualifications (EDSQs), available from August 2020, and are reforming Functional Skills qualifications (FSQs) in digital skills. Digital FSQs will replace existing FSQs in ICT from August 2023.

FSQs offer an accessible and practical route for students who want to improve their skills in English, maths and digital. They are studied primarily by students who are over the age of 16 and in a range of settings, including further education colleges, adult and community settings, the workplace and prisons.

The introduction of digital FSQs builds on the recent steps government has taken to reform FSQs in English and maths, resulting in a new generation of FSQs that will equip students with the skills and knowledge that prepares them for work and life, and which also have recognition and credibility among learners, providers and employers.

The subject content for digital FSQs sets out the purpose, learning aims and outcomes, and the required knowledge and skills for digital FSQs at entry level and level 1. We

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.lloydsbank.com/assets/media/pdfs/banking\\_with\\_us/whats-happening/210923-lb-essential-digital-skills-2021-report.pdf](https://www.lloydsbank.com/assets/media/pdfs/banking_with_us/whats-happening/210923-lb-essential-digital-skills-2021-report.pdf)

<sup>2</sup>

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/796173/improving\\_adult\\_basic\\_digital\\_skills\\_-\\_government\\_consultation\\_response.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/796173/improving_adult_basic_digital_skills_-_government_consultation_response.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/796596/National\\_standards\\_for\\_essential\\_digital\\_skills.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/796596/National_standards_for_essential_digital_skills.pdf)

worked with sector stakeholders and subject experts to revise the subject content following consultation. Working with Ofqual, the government will also ensure that new digital FSQs are regulated and that the regulations ensure comparability between awarding organisations.

The publication of the final subject content represents the most significant development to FSQs in ICT since their introduction in 2010. New digital FSQs will support our ambitions to build a world-class technical education system and to level up the skills of the nation, enabling everyone to fulfil their potential.

## Summary of responses received and the government's response

The following sections set out the views expressed by respondents to the consultation on the digital FSQ subject content. It also outlines the decisions that have been taken to finalise the content.

The written responses and the views expressed by subject experts and other respondents during the consultation period, and throughout the development process, have been important in shaping and strengthening the subject content. Decisions taken to finalise the content have also been shaped by feedback received during consultation workshops with awarding organisations. We worked closely with Ofqual to ensure that the subject content can be regulated, taking into account the views of awarding organisations.

While there was a high degree of support expressed in the headline responses, respondents raised a number of issues in their comments. We received numerous specific suggested amendments and clarifications to the subject content. Each suggestion has been carefully considered when producing the final subject content document.

The main issues which attracted comment included specific knowledge and skills that some respondents thought should be added to the subject content, the difficulty of delivering and assessing some of the subject content statements, an insufficient focus on the practical application of knowledge and skills, and a lack of clarity around the expected scope and range of subject content statements. These issues have been addressed in detail within this response.

This consultation response does not include analysis of issues raised by respondents which were outside the scope of the digital FSQs subject content consultation. For example, comments relating to Essential Digital Skills qualifications, continuous professional development for teachers, the levels at which digital FSQs will be offered (such as calls to include level 2), funding, and assessment rules (such as requirements relating to on-course and formal assessment). Decisions have already been taken in regards to some of these issues and explained in the government response to the consultation on improving adult basic digital skills. Other issues are relevant to Ofqual's consultation on the design, delivery, awarding and maintenance of standards of digital FSQs. Where this is the case, these issues will be addressed by Ofqual in its consultation response and are therefore not reported here.

In addition to considering specific technical responses to the consultation, we have also assessed the impact of the reforms on people in specific groups, including those with protected characteristics. Responses to the two questions on the potential impact of our reforms on people with protected characteristics informed the final subject content. This

analysis is included in our equality impact assessment, published alongside this consultation response, which concludes that the policy will have a positive impact on equality of opportunity, and have a disproportionately positive impact on people in the identified protected characteristic groups as they are overrepresented both among adults taking existing basic digital skills qualifications and among those adults lacking the essential digital skills for life.

Organisations who responded to the consultation are listed at Annex A. The full list of changes made to the subject content following consultation is at Annex B.

## Question analysis

### Appropriateness of subject content

- 1. Does the proposed subject content cover the appropriate skills, knowledge and understanding for digital Functional Skills qualifications?**

Response	Total	Percent
Yes	22	69%
No	9	28%
Not answered	1	3%

More than two thirds of respondents thought that the proposed subject content covered the appropriate skills, knowledge and understanding for digital FSQs.

Respondents who answered ‘yes’ to this question commented that the subject content represents the balance of skills required for the workplace and everyday life, is suitably demanding, and flexible enough to develop alongside future advances in digital technology.

However, there was also a range of issues raised by respondents who answered ‘yes’ and some suggested topics for inclusion, for example, access and use of the control panel, how to personalise settings, practical security, and skills and behaviours to support the use of digital technology, such as problem solving and critical thinking. Two respondents argued for the need to further future-proof the content against advances in digital technology.

Respondents who answered ‘no’ to this question also suggested topics which should be included in the subject content, such as collaboration tools and a requirement to search spreadsheets and databases. Two respondents asked that the subject content include skills relating to the use of digital maps and route planners. Three respondents argued for a greater focus on specific software applications. Two awarding organisations said that there is insufficient focus on digital skills for the workplace, such as spreadsheets, presentations and word processing. One awarding organisation said the subject content is overly focused on online rather than traditional office skills.

Several awarding organisations commented that the scope of the subject content presented challenges for assessment and, in some cases, delivery. For example, providers might not have the facilities to enable participation in a video call, the need to use particular devices might invalidate assessment, and some of the content relied on



learners having free access to the operating system, which may be challenging in some circumstances.

Some respondents thought that the subject content was too demanding and in some instances higher than the ascribed level, and expressed concerns this could be a barrier to learning. One respondent asked us to consider the impact of learners having low levels of literacy or numeracy on their ability to progress during the study of a digital FSQ. However, in contrast, another respondent thought some level 1 content should be moved to entry level, arguing that a deeper understanding of some topics is required at an earlier stage of learning.

An issue raised by several awarding organisations was around a lack of guidance regarding the scope, range and purpose of subject content statements. Awarding organisations called for overarching statements specifying the scope and range of purposes, similar to those in the subject content for English and maths FSQs.

Awarding organisations also queried how the content in brackets and the use of 'for example' should be interpreted when designing the assessment.

## **Government response**

We have amended some of the detailed wording of the subject content in light of the comments received. Given the support expressed by the majority of respondents, we are confident that with those detailed changes the subject content covers the appropriate knowledge, skills and understanding for digital FSQs, and that it enables FSQs to fulfil their purpose of being a qualification for life, work and further study.

The subject content for digital FSQs is based on the national standards for essential digital skills, which set out the skills needed for life and work. The national standards were developed in close consultation with a range of stakeholders, including providers, awarding organisations and digital inclusion organisations, and were consulted on extensively. The standards themselves were informed by the Essential Digital Skills Framework<sup>4</sup>, which defines the skills needed to safely benefit from, participate in, and contribute to the digital world today and in the future.

We have carefully considered suggestions for topics which should be included, or given a greater focus, in the digital FSQ subject content. Some suggestions are already covered, for example the inclusion of practical security, through the requirement to set up and use security features at entry level, and the requirement at level 1 to know how to avoid exposure to malware. Similarly, there is already a requirement to apply system settings at

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/essential-digital-skills-framework/essential-digital-skills-framework>

entry level, including display, sound and language. The subject content is deliberately agnostic in relation to software applications, therefore it would not be appropriate to include use of the control panel as this is software specific.

We have decided not to include skills or knowledge relating to digital maps or route planners because we consider these to go beyond essential digital skills. We have also decided not to include specific content on collaboration because during the development of the national standards, our work with stakeholders determined that using collaborative tools requires skills beyond level 1, however the underpinning skills needed to use such tools are already present in the subject content. Furthermore, the requirement to use digital maps or collaboration software could pose delivery and assessment challenges.

We agree with respondents who raised the importance of future-proofing digital FSQs. The subject content reflects recent significant advances in technology and its application, for example by requiring individuals to know the main features of different types of common devices, such as mobile and smart devices, and to understand cloud based storage. To ensure the content continues to remain relevant, we do not specify skills and knowledge in relation to particular software applications. For instance, we do not specify what a suitable application is to enter, edit and format text, in order to future-proof the statement against changes in commonly used software applications. To ensure they remain relevant and up to date, we will review the national standards for essential digital skills (on which the digital FSQ subject content is based) every three years. In light of this review we will be consider whether any changes are needed to the digital FSQ subject content.

We have carefully considered feedback in relation to the balance between online and traditional office skills, and the requests for the subject content to have a greater emphasis on digital skills and software commonly used in the workplace. We consider the balance in the subject content between online and offline skills to accurately reflect our increasingly online world and the prevalence of online technology for communicating, accessing services and finding information, including in the workplace. In response to feedback, we have placed a greater emphasis within the guidance in the subject content on students demonstrating knowledge and skills by completing workplace related tasks and activities.

We have carefully considered comments received in relation to the level ascribed to the subject content as being either too high or too low. The FSQ subject content mirrors the levels at which digital skills have been classified in the national standards. In developing the standards, we carried out a mapping exercise of basic digital skills, based on the Regulated Qualifications Framework level descriptors up to and including level 2 and against other contemporary digital skills frameworks, including Essential Digital Literacy Skills Wales, DigComp and Core Skills Scotland. Our work with employers, providers and digital inclusion stakeholders concluded that level 1 provides the digital skills needed for adults to operate effectively in day-to-day life. Given the extensive consultation to date

surrounding the level of specific digital skills, we are confident that the levels ascribed to skills in the FSQ subject content accurately reflect the level of difficulty.

In response to concerns raised regarding the ability to deliver and assess some of the subject content statements, we have removed requirements to use particular devices to which centres may not have access, such as wearable technology. Awarding organisations may still choose to include this in specifications but it does not have to be assessed.

We have also removed the requirement to demonstrate some particular skills where learners may not have the necessary permissions, such as the requirements to locate, download and install an application and to keep the operating system and applications on a device up to date. To improve the ability to assess the subject content, for some topics we have changed the requirement for a learner to demonstrate a particular skill to requiring the learner to demonstrate their knowledge instead.

In direct response to feedback from awarding organisations, we have included a new 'scope of study' section for each of the five skills areas at entry level and level 1. Where required for particular statements, we have included a 'scope of study' that indicates, or elaborates on, the intended breadth and depth of the corresponding subject content statement. In some instances these include illustrative examples to indicate the intended range of the relevant subject content to awarding organisations. These examples do not represent an exhaustive list or mandatory assessment content.

In response to calls for an indication of the intended purpose of some subject content statements, where appropriate the 'scope of study' provides a sense of the sorts of workplace or real-life tasks and activities students might be asked to complete to demonstrate their knowledge and skills. To help awarding organisations design purposeful tasks and activities, we have also included new guidance on emphasising the interconnectedness of the five skills areas to enable realistic application of knowledge and skills.

## Supporting progression

### 2. At entry level, does the proposed subject content support individuals to progress to study of digital skills at level 1?

Response	Total	Percent
Yes	24	75%
No	7	22%
Not answered	1	3%

Three quarters of respondents thought the proposed subject content at entry level would support individuals to progress to study of digital skills at level 1. Respondents commented that entry level is comprehensive and provides an opportunity for the development of pre-cursor skills and knowledge.

Respondents who answered 'yes' to this question also provided suggestions for how entry level could better support individuals to progress to level 1. Similar issues were raised by respondents who answered 'no' to this question.

Several respondents thought that some level 1 content should be added, or moved entirely, to entry level. Four respondents thought that an element of numeric processing should be included at entry level, citing concerns such as entry level being too basic and that a lack of focus on numeric processing means there is a large jump to meet level 1 requirements, which may mean learners struggle to progress.

Other topics which respondents thought should be included at entry level, in order to better support progression to level 1, included a greater focus on how digital usage is tracked, how learners can stay safe online, using a device's location and references to specific office software applications.

One respondent commented that entry level assumes a basic understanding of digital terminology which may require prior knowledge. Another respondent commented that, although entry level would support individuals to progress to level 1, it should be made clear if it is a pre-requisite to a level 1 digital FSQ.

Some respondents raised concerns about the ability of learners with learning difficulties or disabilities (LDD) and special educational needs (SEN) to access entry level digital FSQs, as well as those with low literacy levels.

## Government response

Given the high level of agreement that the subject content at entry level supports individuals to progress to study of digital skills at level 1, we have made only limited changes to entry level subject content statements in response to feedback.

The most common suggestion among topics which should be included at entry level raised in response to this question was about the absence of numeric processing at entry level. We have decided not to include this at entry level in the final subject content as it is not an entry level skill, as agreed in consultation with stakeholders during the development of the national standards for essential digital skills.

In response to feedback we have included guidance within the 'purpose' section of the subject content document that some students with little or no prior experience of using digital devices or the internet may need to learn foundation skills, such as turning on a device and using a mouse or keyboard, before progressing on to the knowledge and skills set out in the subject content.

To clarify the intended progression from entry level to level 1, we have added guidance to say that, where relevant, level 1 builds upon and subsumes entry level content, as well as guidance around ways in which the progression between the two levels should be evident, such as the complexity of tasks and activities.

We have carefully considered the impact of the subject content on learners with LDD/SEN. This analysis and our response is included in our equality impact assessment, published alongside this consultation response.

### 3. At entry level and level 1, does the proposed subject content support progression to further vocational and technical study?

Response	Total	Percent
Yes	23	72%
No	9	28%
Not answered	0	0%

The majority of respondents thought that the subject content at entry level and level 1 supported progression to further vocational and technical study. Respondents commented that it could help to build confidence to approach further study requiring a higher level of digital skills, that it would allow individuals to confidently and safely access the internet, and that level 1 will be helpful for students who have not gained essential digital skills by the end of Key Stage 4.

Respondents who answered 'yes' to this question, as well as respondents who answered 'no', raised concerns and provided suggestions for how the proposed subject content could better support progression to further vocational and technical study. These included the concern that the subject content may not be future-proofed sufficiently to enable 'real-life' progression, that more content on online learning and e-portfolios would be helpful in supporting progression to further study, and that the topics of coding and programming should be included.

Some respondents commented that the extent to which the subject content supports progression to further vocational and technical study would depend on the nature of the study route chosen by the individual, for example whether they wish to study a digital related discipline. Two respondents commented that the subject content might not prepare a learner to study for specialist digital roles or other roles requiring frequent use of digital technology. However, one respondent said that level 1 would support the development of competencies and behaviours related to digital literacy.

Four respondents made comments relating to the level of the subject content being too basic to support progression. For example, one respondent commented that entry level and level 1, respectively, represent the bare minimum knowledge required for everyday life and the workplace, and would not support progression to further study.

### Government response

Given the broad agreement that the subject content at entry level and level 1 supported progression to further vocational and technical study, and having considered the specific suggestions from respondents, we have decided not to make any changes to the subject content in response to the comments received for this question.

As set out earlier in this response, as far as possible we have developed the subject content to future-proof it against advances in technology. Furthermore, our approach to reviewing the national standards for essential digital skills every three years will in turn enable us to ensure that the digital FSQ subject content remains relevant and continues to support progression for learners.

We have decided not to include content on online learning and e-portfolios as we consider these to be study skills rather than digital skills. The underpinning digital skills needed to access online learning and e-portfolios are already present in the subject content. We have also decided not to include coding or programming as these are occupational specific and go beyond essential digital skills in most workplaces.

We believe that digital FSQs at both levels will provide a foundation for progression to further education, regardless of the route of study chosen by the individual. Alongside English and maths, digital skills are increasingly important to progress in education. Whether to provide a basis for further study in higher level or occupational specific digital skills, or to further study in an unrelated subject, we are confident that gaining a digital FSQ and the associated digital skills will support progression.

## Skills, knowledge and understanding

### 4. At entry level does the proposed subject content cover the key digital skills, knowledge and understanding needed to complete tasks for everyday life?

Response	Total	Percent
Yes	24	75%
No	8	25%
Not answered	0	0%

Three quarters of respondents thought that the subject content at entry level covered the key digital skills, knowledge and understanding needed to complete tasks for everyday life. Respondents commented that entry level provides a good coverage of the basic skills and knowledge needed for everyday life and independent living.

Respondents who answered 'yes' and those who answered 'no' to this question suggested ways in which entry level could better support the completion of everyday tasks, such as through the inclusion of specific topics. Respondents echoed previously provided suggestions referencing collaboration tools, specific office software and digital maps, as well as more content on managing finances online, psychological and physical wellbeing as well as critical thinking when consuming online content.

Two respondents made comments in relation to increasing the amount, and the complexity, of the content at entry level. However, a higher number of respondents thought that entry level exceeds everyday digital skill requirements, with some respondents saying there is a need for lower entry level content, as it is too demanding and technical, and that basic literacy would be required to access an entry level digital FSQ.

Four respondents raised issues relating to the need for a greater focus on the practical application of everyday skills. For example, respondents thought that in some cases subject content statements were not relevant to everyday life and that examples of how digital skills could be applied in common scenarios were required.

Two respondents commented that entry level digital skills are not just for everyday life but would also be relevant, and support progression, to the workplace.

## Government response

Given the high level of overall agreement, and having considered the specific suggestions from respondents, we are confident that the subject content at entry level covers the key digital skills, knowledge and understanding needed to complete tasks for everyday life.



The changes made to the subject content to increase the emphasis on purposeful and practical application, discussed earlier in this response, will support awarding organisations to design entry level assessments in a way which allows students to demonstrate their knowledge and skills in common everyday scenarios, including online.

In response to feedback, in the 'learning aims and outcomes' section we have clarified that entry level should also be relevant to workplace as well as real-life contexts, in recognition that some learners may enter into employment with an entry level qualification without progressing to level 1 digital FSQs.

**5. At level 1, does the proposed subject content cover the key digital skills, knowledge and understanding needed to complete tasks routinely required in the workplace and everyday life?**

Response	Total	Percent
Yes	22	69%
No	8	25%
Not answered	2	6%

The majority of respondents thought that the subject content at level 1 covered the key digital skills, knowledge and understanding needed to complete tasks routinely required in the workplace and everyday life. However, one respondent who answered 'yes' said this would depend on the specific role, suggesting that creating a database might be required for some workplaces.

Other respondents who answered 'yes' to this question also suggested key digital skills and knowledge which are required routinely in the workplace and everyday life but are not included in the subject content, such as use of specific office software, understanding predictive search engine technology and how this affects results, critical thinking – including identifying scams and hoaxes - and basic coding and programming.

Two respondents who answered 'no' thought that the proposed subject content at level 1 was too limited and simplistic for the workplace and not practical enough.

### **Government response**

Given the broad agreement that the subject content at level 1 covers the key skills, knowledge and understanding needed to complete tasks routinely required in the workplace and everyday life, we have decided not make significant changes to the subject content at level 1 in response to comments received for this question.

We have not included references to knowledge and skills in relation to using specific office software, in order to future proof the subject content against developments in software applications commonly used in the workplace. We have also not included basic coding and programming for the reasons set out earlier in this response.

To ensure that digital FSQs are relevant to the workplace, as well as everyday life, and to reflect the evolving needs of employers, the subject content at level 1 includes topics such as using suitable applications and layout conventions to present information for a range of purposes and audiences, as well as using email for a range of contexts and audiences. We have indicated in the new 'scope of study' section a range of workplace and everyday contexts in which these tasks and activities might be completed.

In response to requests from employers during the consultation on the national standards, the subject content also includes a greater level of detail regarding processing numeric data than is present in the legacy ICT FSQ criteria, for example the ability to sort and filter data and use simple formulae. The subject content also supports the development of critical thinking when applying digital knowledge and skills, for example through the requirement at level 1 to carry out checks to assess the legitimacy of a website.

**6. Does the proposed subject content have the potential to positively impact on specific groups, in particular the 'protected characteristic' groups?**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Yes	22	69%
No	8	25%
Not answered	2	6%

The majority of respondents thought that the proposed subject content had the potential to positively impact on specific groups. Respondents commented that digital FSQs would provide the opportunity for certain groups to gain digital skills for the workplace and everyday life. Respondents noted that by supporting these groups to gain digital skills, the subject content gives people the opportunity to access online content and material more easily.

Respondents who answered 'yes' to this question, as well as those who answered 'no', also raised some concerns about the impact of the subject content on specific groups and/or suggested mitigations to ensure digital FSQs would be accessible for the majority of learners, including those in the protected characteristics groups.

### **Government response**

We have carefully considered the potential positive impact of the subject content for digital FSQs. The subject content will have the effect of improving standards and opportunities for everyone to develop their digital skills. We consider the subject content will have a disproportionately positive impact on people in specific groups, including the protected characteristics groups, because they represent the majority of adults with no or low digital skills.

Further analysis is included in our equality impact assessment, published alongside this consultation response. These considerations have informed the final subject content.

**7. Does the proposed subject content have the potential to negatively impact on specific groups, in particular the 'protected characteristic' groups?**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Yes	19	59%
No	12	38%
Not answered	1	3%

Over half of respondents thought that the proposed subject content had the potential to negatively impact on specific groups, in particular the 'protected characteristic' groups. Specific concerns were raised in relation to three protected characteristics – age, sex and disability.

Issues raised include the accessibility of the subject content for learners with LDD/SEN, assessment design and delivery for learners with LDD/SEN, the impact of the single entry level and the delivery of digital FSQs in a way that supports access for all learners, including those with protected characteristics.

### **Government response**

We have carefully considered the potential negative impact of the subject content on people in specific groups, including those with protected characteristics.

We have concluded that where the subject content has the potential to present challenges to individuals with protected characteristics, those with LDD/SEN or in other vulnerable groups, there are a number of appropriate and available means of mitigation, or alternative pathways for learners to develop their digital skills outside of FSQs.

Further analysis is included in our equality impact assessment, published alongside this consultation response. These considerations have informed the final subject content.

## Conclusion and next steps

We are grateful to all those who responded to the consultation as we finalise the subject content for digital FSQs.

We believe that the changes made in response to the consultation appropriately address the issues raised and have helped improve the subject content, and that the final subject content will provide students with high quality qualifications, equipping them with the full range of essential digital skills for life, work and further study.

Following the publication of the final subject content, we will continue to work with awarding organisations and providers to prepare for the introduction of new digital FSQs from August 2023. In addition, Ofqual will continue its work to develop their regulatory requirements for digital FSQs.

## **Annex A: List of organisations that responded to the consultation**

Association of Colleges

BAES

Barclays

BCS

Central Training Essex/London

CILIP Information Literacy Group

City & Guilds

Cornwall Adult Education

Cumbria County Council

Eastleigh College

Gateway Qualifications Limited

Magic Beans Group

MOD-Army Headquarters

NOCN

OCR Examinations

Open Awards

PearsonUK

Plymouth City Council

Progress to Excellence Ltd

Royal Geographical Society (with the Institute of British Geographers)

St Peter's Hospice

The Colleges' Partnership

The Manchester College

The Open University

Thurrock Council

Total People

University of Derby

## Annex B: List of changes made to the subject content

### Overarching changes

Section	Change
<b>Introduction</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Added guidance to say that digital FSQ specifications must use the subject content and reflect the learning aims and outcomes at each level.</li> <li>• Added guidance to say level 1 subsumes and builds upon on entry level.</li> </ul>
<b>Purpose</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Removed reference to ‘demanding content’.</li> <li>• Changed ‘assessment of underpinning knowledge’ to ‘knowledge and skills’.</li> <li>• Removed reference to the subject content reflecting the full range of skills in the national standards.</li> <li>• Removed statements explaining the purpose of digital FSQs at entry level and level 1.</li> <li>• Added guidance to say some entry level learners may need support to handle and use digital devices before starting their qualification.</li> <li>• Added guidance on the interconnectedness of skills areas and the progression between tasks and activities at entry level and level 1.</li> </ul>
<b>Learning Aims and Outcomes at Entry Level</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Changed ‘learning aims’ to ‘learning aims and outcomes’.</li> <li>• Removed reference to ‘simple’ activities at entry level and added in ‘workplace’ as well as ‘real-life’ contexts.</li> <li>• Changed the content of the learning aims and outcomes as follows:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Removed reference to completion of contextualised and authentic scenarios;</li> <li>- Removed reference to the number of steps required;</li> <li>- Removed reference to selecting an approach, technique or tool without guidance;</li> <li>- Added reference to gaining confidence and fluency in use of digital knowledge and skills;</li> <li>- Added reference to developing a positive attitude</li> </ul> </li> </ul>



Section	Change
	<p>towards the use of digital skills;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Added reference to developing an appreciation for the importance of digital skills;</li> <li>- Added reference to applying knowledge and skills to complete tasks and activities; and</li> <li>- Added reference to entry level providing a basis for further study, work and life.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Learning Aims and Outcomes at Level 1</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Changed ‘learning aims’ to ‘learning aims and outcomes’.</li> <li>• Removed reference to ‘straightforward’ activities at level 1 and added in ‘workplace’.</li> <li>• Changed the content of the learning aims and outcomes as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Removed reference to completion of contextualised and authentic scenarios;</li> <li>- Removed reference to several steps;</li> <li>- Removed reference to selecting from a variety of approaches, techniques or tools without requiring step-by-step instructions;</li> <li>- Added reference to increasing confidence and fluency in use of digital knowledge and skills;</li> <li>- Added reference to developing a positive attitude towards the use of digital skills;</li> <li>- Added reference to applying knowledge and skills to complete tasks and activities;</li> <li>- Added reference to introducing students to areas of life and work which may be new;</li> <li>- Added reference to enabling students to develop and appreciation of the importance of digital skills; and</li> <li>- Added reference to level 1 providing a basis for further study, work and life.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>Subject content: Entry Level and Level 1</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Added scope of study statements for each skill area and associated guidance.</li> <li>• Added an explanation of content denoted by ‘(including...)’ and removed all instances of ‘for example’.</li> </ul>

## Entry Level skills areas

Section	Changes
<b>Using devices and handling information</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Removed reference to wearable technology.</li> <li>• Removed requirement to know about operating systems.</li> <li>• Added knowledge of mobile device applications and security applications.</li> <li>• Removed requirement to locate, download and install an application.</li> <li>• Changed 'world wide web' to 'internet'.</li> <li>• Removed requirement to know internet terminology.</li> <li>• Changed 'work with files to 'use files'.</li> <li>• Changed 'recognise when there is a problem' to 'know when there is a problem', and changed 'distinguish between system and user errors' to 'know the difference between'.</li> <li>• Removed requirement to seek assistance of others when unable to solve a technical problem.</li> </ul>
<b>Creating and editing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Added skill statement to combine different types of information.</li> <li>• Removed requirement to know common file types for images, video and audio.</li> <li>• Combined statements relating to capturing digital media and viewing in a suitable application.</li> </ul>
<b>Communicating</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Changed 'address book' to 'contacts list'.</li> <li>• Removed 'uploaded images' from the range of digital activities which leave a digital footprint.</li> </ul>
<b>Transacting</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Changed 'name, address, telephone number, email address, date' to 'personal details'.</li> <li>• Removed requirement to buy an item/service</li> </ul>

	<p>online.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Separated statements requiring a learner to comply with data validation and verification checks.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Being safe and responsible online</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Added statement on understanding the need to stay safe and respect others when using the internet and communicating online</li> <li>• Removed requirement to know the types of situations where personal information might be stored by devices and online activity.</li> <li>• Changed 'PINs, strong passwords, fingerprint recognition, facial recognition, voice recognition, screen lock' to 'authentication methods'.</li> <li>• Combined statement on understanding the benefits of security software with statement on understanding threats posed by phishing attacks.</li> <li>• Removed requirement to run a virus scan and note the results of the scan.</li> <li>• Removed requirement to know how to report concerns with online content in different contexts.</li> <li>• Removed requirement to know risks of communicating online.</li> <li>• Removed requirement to know that engaging in online activity/share content may be against the law and could result in prosecution.</li> <li>• Changed 'recognise and know how to minimise the effects of physical stresses' to 'know of and know how to...'</li> </ul>

## Level 1 skills areas

Section	Changes
<b>Using devices and handling information</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Removed requirement to keep operating system and applications on a device up to date.</li><li>• Removed requirement to refine searches for information on the internet.</li><li>• Changed 'world wide web' to 'internet'.</li><li>• Removed requirement to apply tags to digital content.</li><li>• Added requirement to be able to appropriately use terminology describing data storage requirements.</li><li>• Removed the requirement to identify and use online learning resources to improve and maintain own digital skills.</li></ul>
<b>Creating and editing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Replaced 'presentation applications' with 'document or web presentation software'.</li><li>• Changed 'sorting and filtering' numeric data to 'process'.</li></ul>
<b>Communicating</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Separated email from other online communications to make two separate skills statements.</li><li>• Removed requirement to use appropriate language and style when communicating online.</li></ul>
<b>Transacting</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Removed requirement to interact with a transactional online service.</li><li>• Removed requirement to compare product options offered by online retailers.</li><li>• Removed requirement to know how to verify legitimacy of an online retailer and changed to carry out checks to reduce the risks involved in transactions online.</li></ul>
<b>Being safe and responsible online</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Removed requirement to configure and use multifactor authentication to access and use online services.</li><li>• Changed requirement to backup files to the cloud</li></ul>

	<p>to requirement to know how.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Changed 'know how to minimise the risk posed by worms, Trojans and ransomware' to 'know how to avoid exposure to...'</li><li>• Removed requirement to recognise and take account of copyright, trademarks and software licence terms.</li><li>• Removed two statements requiring knowledge of activities which are legal/illegal.</li><li>• Changed requirement to know methods to avoid physical and psychological health risks to knowledge of health risks and of how to minimise their effects.</li></ul>
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