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Guidance

English qualifications for apprenticeships

Updated 4 August 2025

Applies to England

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Apprentices aged 16 to 18 at the start of their training are required to achieve an English qualification to complete their apprenticeship, if they do not already hold a suitable equivalent qualification. Apprentices who do not already hold a suitable equivalent qualification in English are funded to achieve up to an approved level 2 qualification in this subject.

Apprentices aged 19 and over at the start of their training can also be funded to study up to an approved level 2 qualification in English, if they do not already hold a suitable equivalent qualification and their employer agrees that this should be part of their training plan.

Further information is set out in the [apprenticeship funding rules](#).

This guidance sets out which qualifications or evidence are accepted as a suitable

equivalent qualification. Apprentices who already hold suitable equivalent qualifications are not eligible for funding for English qualifications under the apprenticeship funding rules.

Only the qualifications described are acceptable equivalents for English in an apprenticeship. This means if a qualification is not included in the published list, apprentices aged 16 to 18 at the start of their apprenticeship will still need to meet the minimum English requirements set out in the funding rules.

English in level 2 apprenticeships

The UK qualifications listed in this section are acceptable equivalents for English in a level 2 apprenticeship, as long as the apprentice has met or exceeded the minimum grade requirement for the qualification.

Unless explicitly stated in this section, qualifications in English are only acceptable if English is the primary language for the apprentice. This means that the apprentice must have been taught, assessed or examined through the English language, rather than through any other language.

Qualifications from England

Qualification type	Subject title for English	Minimum acceptable grade
GCSE	Any GCSE with English in the title	1 if awarded from 2017 onwards, G if awarded before 2017
Functional skills level 1 (must be regulated by Ofqual)	English	Pass
A level	Any A level with English in the title	E if awarded from 1986, ordinary grade if awarded before 1986
AS level	Any AS level with	E

English in the title

International GCSE (iGCSE)	Any international GCSE with English in the title	G or 1
Level 1 or 2 certificates	English English language English literature First language English	G or 1
Pre-U certificate	Literature in English	P3
IBO middle years programme level 1 or 2 certificate	Language and literature	1
International baccalaureate diploma	Standard, subsidiary or higher qualification in: English A: literature (or English A1) English A: language and literature (or English A2) English literature and performance	3
British sign language level 1	British sign language	Pass
Certificate of secondary education (CSE)	English language English literature	2 or 3
Key skills level 1 (qualification or units)	Communication (literacy)	Pass
Basic skills certificates level 1	Certificate in adult literacy	Pass
Access to higher education diploma (awarded up to the	English units	Minimum of 12 credits for English at level 2

end of July 2014)

International certificate of Christian education (general or advanced)	English	E
European baccalaureate	English 1 Advanced English 1	5.00
O level	English language	E (if achieved from 1975 onwards)
-	English literature	Pass (if achieved before 1975)

Qualifications from other UK nations

You can find more detailed information about Scottish qualifications in the [English and maths requirements in apprenticeships guidance](#).

Qualification type	Subject title for English	Minimum acceptable grade
Essential skills (Northern Ireland) level 1	Communication	Pass
Scottish advanced higher (SCQF level 7)	English	D
Scottish higher (SCQF level 6)	English	D
Scottish national certificate unit (SCQF level 6)	Communication 4	Pass
Scottish ordinary grade (SCQF level 5)	English	D or 4 (where achieved between 1962 and 1990)
Scottish national 5 (SCQF level 5)	English	D

Scottish national 4 (SCQF level 4)	English	Pass
Scottish intermediate 1 (SCQF level 4)	English	D
Scottish standard grade (general) (SCQF level 4)	English	4
Scottish core skill unit (SCQF level 4)	Communication	Pass
Scottish workplace core skills unit (SCQF level 4)	Communication	Pass
Scottish national unit (SCQF level 4)	Literacy English	Pass
Essential skills (Wales) Level 1	Communication skills Communication	Pass

English in apprenticeships at level 3 to 7

The UK qualifications listed below are acceptable equivalents for English in an apprenticeship at level 3 to 7, as long as the apprentice has met or exceeded the minimum grade requirement for the qualification.

Unless explicitly stated, English qualifications are only acceptable if English is the primary language for the apprentice. This means that the apprentice must have been taught, assessed or examined through the English language, rather than through any other language.

Qualifications from England

Qualification type	Subject title for	Minimum acceptable
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	English	grade
GCSE (must be regulated by Ofqual, CCEA or Qualifications Wales)	Any GCSE with English in the title	4 if awarded from 2017 onwards, C if awarded before 2017
Functional skills level 2	English	Pass
A level	Any A level with English in the title	E if awarded from 1986, ordinary grade if awarded before 1986
AS level	Any AS level with English in the title	E
International GCSE (iGCSE)	Any international GCSE with English in the title	C or 4
Level 1 or 2 certificates	English English language English literature	C or 4
Pre-U certificate	Literature in English	P3
IBO middle years programme level 1 or 2 certificate	Language and literature	3
International baccalaureate diploma	Standard, subsidiary or higher qualification in: English A: literature (or English A1) English A: language and literature (or English A2) English literature and performance	3
British sign language level 1	British sign language	Pass

Certificate of secondary education (CSE)	English language English literature	1
Key skills level 1 (qualification or units)	Communication (literacy)	Pass
Basic skills certificates level 1	Certificate in adult literacy	Pass
Access to higher education diploma (awarded up to the end of July 2014)	English units	Minimum of 12 credits for English at level 2
International certificate of Christian education (general or advanced)	English	E
European baccalaureate	English 1 Advanced English 1	5.00
O level	English language English literature	C if achieved from 1975 onwards, pass if achieved before 1975

Qualifications from other UK nations

You can find more detailed information about Scottish qualifications in the [English and maths requirements in apprenticeships guidance](#).

Qualification type	Subject title for English	Minimum acceptable grade
Essential skills (Northern Ireland) level 2	Communication	Pass
Scottish advanced higher (SCQF level 7)	English	C
Scottish higher (SCQF level 6)	English	C

Scottish national certificate unit (SCQF level 6)	Communication 4	Pass
Scottish ordinary grade (SCQF level 5)	English	C (where achieved between 1962 and 1990)
Scottish national 5 (SCQF level 5)	English	C
Scottish intermediate 2 (SCQF level 5)	English	C
Scottish standard grade (credit) (SCQF level 5)	English	2
Scottish core skill unit (SCQF level 5)	Communication	Pass
Scottish workplace core skills unit (SCQF level 5)	Communication	Pass
Scottish national unit (SCQF level 5)	Literacy English	Pass
Essential skills (Wales) Level 2	Communication skills Communication	Pass

Help and support

You can find more information about the English requirements in the [apprenticeship funding rules](#).

We do not provide a service to check and validate if qualifications, certificates or documents meet the requirements to be an acceptable equivalent for an apprenticeship. Apprenticeship providers or end-point assessment organisations are responsible for ensuring that an apprentice's evidence of achieving English equivalent qualifications is valid and acceptable, using this guidance.

If you are an apprentice and you have a query about the English requirements for your apprenticeship, please discuss your situation with your apprenticeship training provider in the first instance. If they are unable to support you, you can email nationalhelpdesk@apprenticeships.gov.uk or call 0800 0150 400.

If you are an employer, apprenticeship provider, or an apprenticeship endpoint assessment organisation and you have queries about the English requirements for apprenticeships, contact our apprenticeship service support by email on helpdesk@manage-apprenticeships.service.gov.uk or call on 0800 0150 600.

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