

ISSUE 08 – NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2014

The monthly update from City & Guilds on anything to do with numbers, words or digital/ICT skills across **England, Northern Ireland and Wales**.

In this festive double-issue:

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Functional Skills: securing the future of

Relevant to: *Functional Skills (3748) (England only)*

Purpose: *qualification developments/updates; public policy/strategy/funding; operational note*

As we indicated in *Issue 07*, the Government has recently reaffirmed its **support for Functional Skills** – at the same time as wanting to enhance these qualifications' recognition and status with employers. We warmly welcome this change of heart, at the same time as acknowledging recent **comments from Ofqual** that some of these qualifications are “capable of improvement”.

The current Functional Skills qualifications are now just over four years old. Throughout that time we have developed and improved our offer. For example, when these qualifications first launched in 2010 only FS English was available onscreen, and all paper assessments were on fixed dates.

Look out for further improvements...

We explained in *Issue 07* that we're currently working on a new delivery platform for FS ICT – known as In-Application (or 'In-App') assessment, as well as outlining a series of improvements we've recently made to some of the tools within our onscreen FS Mathematics assessments. We're now beginning to work on a number of other revisions and improvements to make these qualifications as accessible as possible, whilst remaining true to their intended purpose.

...Functional Skills, Essential Skills, ESOL, Core Maths, Framework quals, pedagogy, policy/funding...



We'll be saying more about each of our planned changes and likely timescales over the next couple of months.

...and some immediate changes

In the meantime we are making a couple of changes to **FS English** from **January 2015** – again to clarify expectations and help maintain the rigour of these qualifications:

- FS English Writing at Level 2: reduction in time allowance to 1 hour 5 minutes**
 Both the Level 1 and Level 2 FS English Writing assessments were originally designed to last for an hour, although the time allowance for Level 2 included an additional 15 minutes' notional 'reading time'.

The background to this dates from our pre-2010 Functional Skills pilot when Reading and Writing were combined into a single assessment paper and candidates needed time to digest lengthy source documents. However, it's less easy to justify allowing a significant amount of additional reading time when the brief for each task within the current Level 2 Writing assessments is usually just a few lines.

The time allowance for Level 2 is therefore being reduced by 10 minutes, making the total time available to candidates **1 hour 5 minutes**. This change will be phased in during January, and may apply to any assessments booked or taken after 12 January 2015.

We appreciate this could disadvantage some Level 2 learners who have prepared on the basis of this being a 1 hour 15 minutes assessment. We will therefore be monitoring pass rates carefully over the next few months for any impact.

The new time allowance will be stated on the front of all Level 2 assessment papers and stationery from January (with the time allowance on the e-volve system adjusted accordingly), although **please also ensure this change is disseminated** as necessary within your centre.

Writing at Level 1 is **not** affected by this change. These assessments will remain 1 hour.

- Clarifying that spell/grammar checkers and electronic dictionaries may be used across all FS English Writing assessments**
 We already state in the **Functional Skills qualification handbook, FAQs** and **external assessment guide**, that there is no finite list of items permitted or prohibited during these assessments. Candidates are expected to deploy their normal methods of working, and within reason should therefore be able to access any equipment routinely available to them, as long as this does **not**:

- enable them to communicate/collude with other candidates or anyone external to the assessment
 - include pre-prepared notes, crib-sheets, tutor-developed or other materials designed *specifically* to assist with this assessment.

We are aware there is some confusion about whether this includes spell/grammar checkers or electronic dictionaries. For the avoidance of doubt, both are regarded as routinely available equipment – and therefore permissible as long as the device used cannot access the internet or otherwise transmit/receive information.

To help clarify this point, we are **amending the instructions on the front our FS English Writing assessment papers** so they state explicitly that spell/grammar checkers and electronic dictionaries may be used.

For candidates accessing the onscreen-delivered Writing assessments, please note there is no in-built spell/grammar-checking facility within the e-volve system. Nevertheless, it is perfectly acceptable for candidates to use a **separate hand-held electronic device** for this purpose – again, as long as it cannot access the internet or otherwise transmit/receive information.

- **Additional monitoring of Speaking, Listening and Communication**

We have asked our External Quality Assurers (EQAs) to pay particular attention to the Speaking, Listening and Communication (SLC) component of FS English – especially because SLC is the only internally-assessed component of Functional Skills at levels 1-2 and amounts to a third of the FS English qualification.

We are expecting this to include more **direct observation of SLC assessments taking place**, especially at levels 1 and 2. The timing and frequency of monitoring visits may therefore need to be reviewed in some cases to accommodate this. Besides observing assessments, EQAs have also been asked to look more closely at centres' Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) processes so as to understand more fully how assessments are carried out consistently and accurately across all staff/departments/sites.

Although we do not insist on video/audio recording for Functional Skills SLC assessments, it is worth noting that recording at least a sample of assessments can assist internal standardisation considerably – as well as helping assessors when trying to recall what was said by whom during a discussion, and whether/how each of the assessment criteria have been met.

We appreciate video recording (and to some extent audio recording) can be intrusive for some candidates, and we would advise centres to approach this sensitively. At the very least, appropriate permissions must be obtained from candidates.

Meanwhile, on the policy front...

Relevant to: all post-16 maths/numeracy and English/literacy learning (**England and Wales**)

Purpose: public policy/strategy/funding; general information

There have been a couple of policy announcements over the last few weeks, from both Government and Opposition politicians, relevant to maths and English in **England**:

- **Education and Training Foundation (ETF) to review maths and English qualifications**
The Government has asked to ETF to lead a review of what employers and learners need from the maths and English qualifications taken by students who are not studying GCSEs. We understand this will involve looking at all non-GCSE qualifications, including Functional Skills.
- **Labour calls for new applied maths qualification at Level 2**
Shadow Education Secretary, Tristram Hunt, has indicated that a future Labour government would support the introduction of a new Level 2 qualification in mathematics for post-16 learners – along similar lines to the new Core Maths qualifications at Level 3 (see below). Whether this would be in addition to, or in place of, Functional Skills is unclear at this stage.

The Welsh Government has also published a range of resources explaining each of the main changes to the qualifications system in **Wales** that take effect from next September – including the revised Essential Skills qualifications and redesigned Welsh Bac. These resources are intended for learners, parents and employers, as well as providers, and are available from **www.qualifiedforlife.org.uk**.

Using and Applying Mathematics: now recognised as a Core Maths qualification

Relevant to: Level 3 Using and Applying Mathematics (3849) (**England only**)

Purpose: qualification developments/updates; public policy/strategy/funding;

The Department for Education (DfE) has announced that our new Level 3 Certificate in Using and Applying Mathematics (3849) has been **recognised under the new ‘Core Maths’ qualification category**. This enables it to count towards the new **Technical Baccalaureate Performance Measure** for 16-19 year-old learners in England from 2017.

We’ve already advised in *Issue 07* that Using and Applying Mathematics will attract UCAS tariff points from 2016 onwards. Further information can be found the **3849 qualification documents page** – including our new expanded guide to teaching Core Maths.

Support events

We’re holding a series of network events and webinars (see dates/venues, below) to explain more about this qualification, including models for delivery and discussing how we can support learners and practitioners. These events are open to any current/prospective City & Guilds centres involved in the Core Maths Early Adopter Teaching Projects (ETPs), and others intending to offer this qualification from 2015-16.

The DfE-funded **Core Maths Support Programme** has also published details of its forthcoming events and other support for ETPs and Core Maths leads.

Don’t miss our current series of events: maths, English, Functional Skills, ESOL, digital learning resources...

Relevant to: all City & Guilds Maths and English qualifications and learning (**England** – and **Wales** for the ESOL events)

Purpose: events

Over the next few months we’re holding a series of face-to-face networks and webinars covering:

- the new ESOL Skills for Life qualifications (4692)
- maths and English qualifications (3847 and 3844)
- Functional Skills (3748)
- Level 3 Using and Applying Mathematics (3849), our Core Maths qualification
- digital maths and English learning resources – e-Toolkit and e-Functional Skills.

Dates/venues are as shown below. All of these events are free of charge and open to any current City & Guilds centre. To book your place, please go to **www.cityandguilds.com/events**.

Tuesday 9 December 2014	Maths/English digital resources webinar	13.30 - 14.30

New ESOL Skills for Life: recognising prior achievement

Relevant to: ESOL Skills for Life (3692 and 4692) (England, Northern Ireland and Wales)

Purpose: qualification developments/updates ;operational note

As we indicated in *Issue 06*, we have been evaluating how achievements from previous ESOL Skills for Life qualifications could potentially be counted towards the new Certificate-sized Framework qualifications within the 4692 suite. Both the old and new qualifications are based on the National Standards for Adult Literacy, although because they are structured slightly differently we could not automatically assume that the old components would automatically cover all of the requirements for the new units.

Don't forget – each unit is now a (fundable) qualification

Rather than simply assuming that all learners should be steered towards the new Certificate-sized qualifications, it's important to appreciate that the Framework ESOL qualifications are organised more flexibly – with each with each mode/unit now a 'full' Award-sized qualification in its own right.

In many cases there will be no particular advantage in consolidating learners' achievements into a single Certificate-sized qualification, especially if the three modes were achieved at different times/levels. Indeed, from the perspective of funding and success rates, there might even be *disadvantages* in doing so.

Nevertheless, we are setting up a mechanism that will, where necessary, enable any of the following to be counted towards the **Certificate** sized qualifications within 4692:

- individual components of the previous City & Guilds ESOL Skills for Life qualification (3692)
- individual components from other awarding organisations' previous (NQF) ESOL Skills for Life qualifications
- individual units from other awarding organisations' new ESOL Skills for Life qualifications.

There will be more detail about the process for checking eligibility and submitting results in the next issue of *All About...*, although in essence it will be broadly similar to the existing process for recognising prior/proxy achievements from other qualifications within 3692. The only crucial difference is there will be separate modules on the system for recording prior achievement, principally because these achievements can only be counted towards the Certificate-sized qualifications within 4692 – **not** the Awards. In all cases at least one of the three units must have been achieved by completing a 4692 assessment.

Remember – 3692 closes at the end of this month

The last registration date for all of the old (NQF) ESOL Skills for Life qualifications (3692) is 31 December 2014. Certification will then remain available for a further **12 months**, until 31 December 2015.

All of the internally-assessed components of 3692 – ie the portfolio assessment packs for Writing and Speaking & Listening at levels 1-2 and all Entry level assignments, will remain available for use until next December.

We advised in *Issue 06* that there will not be any further fixed-date opportunities to sit the interim Level 1-2 assessment within 3692, although there is an alternative route still available that involves accessing the assessment via our Functional Skills English suite (3748-01).

This route is only possible because the interim Reading assessment we developed for use during 2013-14 was based on the same specification as our FS English Reading assessments. To be clear, this is purely an administrative procedure and ESOL learners using this route simply to access the Reading assessment should **not** be regarded (eg for ILR purposes) as having been enrolled for a Functional Skills English qualification.

If you have any **3692** candidates needing to access the Level 1 or 2 Reading assessments, please follow these steps:

1. Create a registration record (via the Walled Garden) under **3748-01**. There's no charge for this, and it **doesn't** commit learners to a particular FS English qualification aim (eg 3748-01 includes access to all five levels of FS English).
2. Order the relevant Level 1 or 2 Reading assessment – either by scheduling an e-evolve test or by booking a Named on Demand paper assessment.
3. Once the candidate has achieved a pass in this assessment (the result will be recorded on the Walled Garden, although no certificate will be issued), the result can be recorded within 3692 using the 'proxy' codes (eg 3692-501 for Level 1). There will need to be an audit trail for Internal/External Quality Assurance purposes, confirming in each case that the candidate has successfully completed this assessment.

If your centre does not currently offer Functional Skills with City & Guilds (or you're based outside England), please speak to your local Quality team. In the circumstances we may be able to grant approval to facilitate this.

Please also bear in mind that in some cases it might be worth migrating 3692 candidates to the new Awards within 4692 to complete any remaining assessments.

More assignments now available for 4692

We've added three more live assignment titles to the **4692 qualification webpage**:

- Travel and Transport (at all five levels)
- Finding a Job (at all five levels)
- Me and My Home (at Entry level so far – levels 1 and 2 will follow shortly).

These are **in addition** to the two live assignment titles already available at each level. We will also be adding further titles, including some tailored specifically for 16-18 learners, during the spring.

AoC publishes language and employability research on Jobcentre Plus mandated provision

Relevant to: *language/employability learning by unemployed adults (primarily **England**, although also relevant to **Wales**)*

Purpose: *public policy/strategy/funding; operational note; events; general information*

The Association of Colleges (AoC) commissioned the Institute of Education National Research and Development Centre for Adult Literacy (NRDC) a few months ago to report on good practice in the provision of ESOL for Jobcentre Plus (JCP)-mandated clients.

The report, largely funded by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS), contains a number of good examples of where ESOL qualifications and other learning are being used creatively to support language learning. **Click here to access the report.**

2015-16 Framework maths and English qualifications: adult funding for

Relevant to: Principles of Using English/Mathematics and English/Mathematics Skills (3844 and 3847) (**England** only)
Purpose: public policy/strategy/funding

We asked for your help in *Issue 06* in demonstrating evidence of demand for these qualifications so that we could apply to the Skills Funding Agency to have them approved for adult skills funding in England for 2015-16.

We're pleased to report that we've now obtained sufficient letters to submit applications for each of the 36 qualifications within the 3844/3847 suites that are eligible for funding under the new business rules announced in June 2014 (see our **guide to maths and English policy/funding in England** for further details).

We'd like to record our thanks to everyone who helped with this over the last few months. Assuming the Skills Funding Agency accept our applications, these qualifications should now appear in the first edition of the funding rates catalogue for 2015-16 when it is published – we understand this will be in February.

Additional guidance on 16-18 condition of funding

Relevant to: all maths and English qualifications/learning (affects only 16-18 learners in **England**)
Purpose: public policy/strategy/funding

Finally, the Education Funding Agency (EFA) has **published additional guidance on the maths and English 'condition of funding'** that applies to most types of full-time pre-19 learning.

Key points include:

- Clarification that the condition of funding only applies to 16-18 learners (or 19-25 if they have a Learning Difficulty Assessment or Education and Healthcare Plan) following a study programme of **150 hours** or more, if they do not hold a GCSE grade A*-C or equivalent qualification in maths and/or in English.
- Confirmation that the condition of funding requires learners to study maths and/or English (as applicable) in each academic year of their programme, and that this must involve being *enrolled* for one of the listed qualifications (eg Functional Skills, ESOL or GCSE),
- Further detail on what is meant by 'enrolled' – eg that learners must be timetabled for at least two weeks (if the planned length is up to 24 weeks), although this doesn't necessarily require them to achieve the qualification or undergo assessment – this won't affect the condition of funding, although might impact on success rates.
- Clarification that learners who already have A*-C GCSEs achieved in Wales or Northern Ireland, or the equivalent Scottish Standard Grade, Intermediate 2 or National certificates, are not subject to the condition of funding (this wasn't previously explicit).

We will be updating our **guide to maths and English policy/funding in England** in due course to reflect these latest changes (the 150-hour rule is the only material change from what was contained in previous guidance).

Tell us what you think

All About... is published monthly and brings together all of the key developments from City & Guilds relating to maths/numeracy/number, English/literacy/language/communication and ICT/digital skills learning and qualifications. You'll find information about **all** of the 'maths and English' qualifications that we offer across **England, Northern Ireland and Wales** – including **Functional Skills** and **Essential Skills**.

All About... also includes updates on teaching and learning resources, as well as relevant public policy or other information we think you might be interested in. We've tried to categorise each article by indicating any specific City & Guilds qualification(s) it relates to, and/or if it applies only to England, Northern Ireland or Wales.

Each edition is numbered, so we can refer back to previous issues or tell you when information has been superseded.

If there's anything else you'd particularly like us to cover or explain more fully in future issues of *All About...*, please feel free to drop us a line to **mathsandenglish@cityandguilds.com** or tweet using the hashtag **#CGMathsEnglish**.

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