Functional Skills Qualification in English

Level 2

QUALIFICATION GUIDE

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About the Qualification

Title	Open Awards Level 2 Functional Skills Qualification in English
QAN	603/4605/X
Sector	14.1 Foundations for Learning and Life
Level	Two (2)
Funding	Please click here for more information
Pricing Information	Please click here for more information
Review Date	31/07/2025

Ofqual Purpose	Prepare for further learning or training and/or develop knowledge and/or skills in a subject area
Ofqual Sub-Purpose	Prepare for further learning or training

About Functional Skills
Functional Skills qualifications provide reliable evidence of a learner's achievements against demanding content that is relevant to the workplace. They provide assessment of learners' underpinning knowledge as well as their ability to apply this in different contexts. They also provide a foundation for progression into employment or further technical education and develop skills for everyday life. In some contexts, Functional Skills qualifications also play a part in the Government's accountability systems. A key aim for Functional Skills English qualifications is that they should enable the learner to develop confidence and fluency in, and a positive attitude towards, English. Learners are required to demonstrate their competence in English by using it in real-world situations as well as to demonstrate a sound grasp of basic English knowledge and skills. **Purpose of Functional Skills English for Level 1 and Level 2:** a qualification to demonstrate the ability at an appropriate level to read, write, speak, listen and communicate in English, and to apply this knowledge and these skills in familiar situations. Achievement of these qualifications can provide the basis for further study at Levels 1 and 2.

Achievement of the Qualification

To achieve the qualification, learners must successfully pass all three assessment components at Level 2:

- One externally set and marked assessment in reading
- One externally set and marked assessment in writing
- One externally set*, and internally assessed assessment (comprising of two tasks) in speaking, listening and communicating (SLC)

A learner is awarded 'pass' or 'fail' for each component. If a learner does not achieve a 'pass' result in any of the components, they will be issued with a 'fail' result for that component.

A learner must achieve a 'pass' result in all three components in order to achieve a 'pass' result for the qualification.

Learners who have met the pass threshold for all three components of the Level 2 qualification in Functional Skills English will be issued with a certificate, notifying them of their 'pass' result and will be awarded with the Open Awards Level 2 Functional Skills Qualification in English.

The three components can be achieved separately over time. However, certification will not take place until all three components have been achieved at Level 2. Each component contributes equally to the achievement of the qualification. A learner is able to carry forward a 'pass' result for any of the single components from a previous attempt at the same level, either with Open Awards or any other awarding organisation. Please see the 'Assessment Methods' section below for more information.

**Providers may set their own SLC Tasks at Level 2, provided that they are approved by Open Awards in advance of the first assessment. For more information, please see 'Setting Provider Devised SLC Assessment Tasks' guidance available on the Portal*

Total Qualification Time/Guided Learning	
Total Qualification Time (hours)	60
Guided Learning (hours)	55

Age Range and Restrictions:	
Pre -16	✓
16 – 18	✓
19+	✓
Any other restrictions specific to the qualification(s)	None

Any specified entry requirements
There are no restrictions on learner entry to these qualifications. However, it is recommended that learners undertake a comprehensive initial diagnostic assessment to ensure that they are following an appropriate learning programme leading to a summative assessment.

Assessment Method Summary
Achievement of our English qualifications is through successful completion of three individual component task-based assessments at Level 2 which are: **Reading** • Externally set by Open Awards • Externally marked by Open Awards *(Total Marks Available: 30)* **Writing** • Externally set by Open Awards • Externally marked by Open Awards *(Total Marks Available: 60)* **Speaking, Listening and Communicating** • Externally set assessment • Internally assessed and quality assured by the centre • Externally quality assured by Open Awards Sample assessments are available on the Portal and can be accessed by the Assessment Administrator contact at your provider. Sample assessments cover both paper-based and on-screen modes of delivery. Providers must ensure that learners have utilised the sample assessments in advance of sitting an on-screen assessment to ensure they are familiar with the assessment platform and potential question types. The assessment tasks are based on real-life contexts. Contexts may be based on: • Work and education • Community, citizenship and environment • Family, home and social issues The amount of time allocated for each assessment is: • Reading: 1 hour • Writing: 1 hour • Speaking, Listening and Communicating: 30 minutes **The total assessment time is 2 hours and 30 minutes.**

All assessments must be taken under controlled assessment conditions. Further guidance can be found in Open Awards' Instructions for Conducting Controlled Assessments or Open Awards' Instructions for Conducting Controlled Assessments Remotely available via the Portal.

Reading and writing assessments can be carried out by either on-screen or by paper-based modes of delivery.

On-screen assessments are delivered on demand via the XAMS assessment system.

Paper-based assessments are printed by Open Awards and sent to the provider in line with the published assessment calendar.

Completed paper based assessment papers must be returned according to the instructions provided by Open Awards within the specified timeframe.

When taking the assessment for the Writing component, learners will not be allowed access to external aids in relation to spelling, punctuation and grammar including dictionaries and spelling and grammar checking software.

Speaking, Listening and Communicating (SLC) assessments are assessed and internally verified by the provider and externally quality assured by Open Awards. Providers must use the live SLC assessment tasks provided by Open Awards. These are available for Assessment Administrators to download via the Portal.

Providers may set their own SLC Tasks at Level 2, provided that they are approved by Open Awards in advance of the first assessment. For more information, please see 'Setting Provider Devised SLC Assessment Tasks' guidance available on the Portal.

There is a standard Record of Learner Achievement and Assessor Sheet for the SLC assessment components which should always be used. This clearly states how skills are observed and recorded, and when to award a Pass or Fail grade.

The SLC component is assessed practically through two tasks; and the results of the assessment must be entered into the XAMS system by the provider for external quality assurance. The provider must also upload the learner records of achievement and assessment and recordings of the assessment to their allocated Sharepoint folder.

If a learner has completed one or two English components for the reformed Functional Skills Qualifications with another awarding organisation then this achievement can be acknowledged by Open Awards. Please complete the Recognition of Prior Learning Request (RPL) Form available on our Portal or contact us for more information.

Reasonable adjustments and special considerations may be required for individual learners to enable them to undertake assessments fairly. Please see our Reasonable Adjustments and Special Considerations Policy available on the Portal for details on how to apply for and implement these measures.

British Sign Language, as well as Sign Supported English, can be used as a reasonable adjustment for the Speaking, Listening and Communicating component. Please contact the Quality Assurance team on quality@openawards.org.uk for more information.

Subject Content

Open Awards Level 2 Functional Skills Qualifications in English supports learners to be able to speak, listen, communicate, read and write clearly, accurately, confidently and with effectiveness. Learners should be able to:

- Listen, understand and make relevant contributions to discussions with others in a range of contexts;
- Apply their understanding of language to adapt delivery and content to suit audience and purpose;
- Read a range of different text types confidently and fluently, applying their knowledge and understanding of texts to their own writing;
- Write texts of varying complexity, with accuracy, effectiveness, and correct spelling, punctuation and grammar;
- Understand the situations when, and audiences for which, planning, drafting and using formal language are important, and when they are less important.

Learners should, with some direction and guidance, be able to apply these functional skills to informal and some formal contexts, in familiar situations.

Scope of study: Speaking, Listening and Communicating
The scope of study (SoS) for Speaking, Listening and Communicating, including the SoS references from the DfE Subject Content is included below:

SoS1	Identify and extract relevant information from extended explanations or presentations
SoS2	Follow narratives and lines of argument
SoS3	Respond effectively to detailed or extended questions and feedback
SoS4	Make requests and ask detailed and pertinent questions to obtain specific information in a range of contexts
SoS5	Communicate information, ideas and opinions clearly and effectively, providing further detail and development if required
SoS6	Express opinions and arguments and support them with relevant and persuasive evidence
SoS7	Use language that is effective, accurate and appropriate to context and situation
SoS8	Make relevant and constructive contributions to move discussion forward
SoS9	Adapt contributions to discussions to suit audience, purpose and medium
SoS10	Interject and redirect discussion using appropriate language and register

Learners should be able to apply their speaking, listening and communicating skills in the following contexts at Level 2 (all of varying lengths):

- extended narratives
- information (information may be on technical, concrete or abstract topics)
- discussions
- detailed explanations and presentations

The SLC assessment is made up of two sub-tasks:

- Task 1 (10 minutes): presentation followed by Q&A
- Task 2 (10 minutes): group discussion

Please note, the total assessment time takes into account a break of up to ten minutes between the two sub-tasks.

Assessment of learners' skills in Speaking, Listening and Communicating will be conducted using two discussions in a group of between three and five learners.

If three learners are not available, other group members could be a work colleague, staff member or a similar appropriate person, but **must not** be the Assessor. These special circumstances would need to be approved by Open Awards prior to the assessment taking place.

For SLC, there is no boundary mark. A 'Pass' is awarded to learners who meet the Pass criteria (outlined below).

	The criteria for a Pass Performance descriptor
Pass	• Learners generally demonstrate the requirements for the level - consistently, - effectively, and - to an appropriate degree for that level. • Overall performance across the range of requirements for the level is secure; any insufficient demonstration of any individual content statement is balanced by appropriate demonstration of that same content statement elsewhere.

The assessment criteria that learners are required to meet in order to demonstrate this performance (described by the pass descriptor) are listed under the Scope of Study above and set out in the 'Record of Learner Achievement and Assessment Record Sheet'. Each Scope of Study must be achieved in order for a 'Pass' to be awarded for this component.

Scope of study: Reading

The scope of study (SoS) for Reading, including the SoS references from the DfE Subject Content is included below:

SoS11	Identify the different situations when the main points are sufficient and when it is important to have specific details
SoS12	Compare information, ideas and opinions in different texts, including how they are conveyed
SoS13	Identify implicit and inferred meaning in texts
SoS14	Understand the relationship between textual features and devices, and how they can be used to shape meaning for different audiences and purposes
SoS15	Use a range of reference materials and appropriate resources (e.g. glossaries, legends/keys) for different purposes, including to find the meanings of words in straightforward and complex sources
SoS16	Understand organisational features and use them to locate relevant information in a range of straightforward and complex sources
SoS17	Analyse texts, of different levels of complexity, recognising their use of vocabulary and identifying levels of formality and bias
SoS18	Follow an argument, identifying different points of view and distinguishing fact from opinion
SoS19	Identify different styles of writing and writer's voice

Learners should be able to apply their reading skills in the following contexts at Level 2:

- In a range of straightforward and complex texts of varying lengths
- On a range of topics
- On texts that instruct, describe, explain and persuade

Scope of study: Writing

The scope of study (SoS) for Writing, including the SoS references from the DfE Subject Content is included below:

Spelling, punctuation and grammar (SPaG)

SoS20	Punctuate writing correctly using a wide range of punctuation markers (e.g. colons, commas, inverted commas, apostrophes and quotation marks)
SoS21	Use correct grammar (e.g. subject-verb agreement, consistent use of a range of tenses, definite and indefinite articles) and modality devices (e.g. to express probability or desirability)
SoS22	Spell words used in work, study and daily life, including a range of specialist words

Please note that 40% (12 out of 30 marks per writing task) of the total marks available for the Writing component will be allocated to SPaG. Please see the sample mark schemes for more information.

Writing Composition

SoS23	Communicate information, ideas and opinions clearly, coherently and effectively
SoS24	Write text of an appropriate level of detail and of appropriate length (including where this is specified) to meet the needs of purpose and audience
SoS25	Organise writing for different purposes using appropriate format and structure (e.g. standard templates, paragraphs, bullet points, tables)
SoS26	Convey clear meaning and establish cohesion using organisational markers effectively
SoS27	Use different language and register (e.g. persuasive techniques, supporting evidence, specialist words), suited to audience and purpose
SoS28	Construct complex sentences consistently and accurately, using paragraphs where appropriate

Learners should be able to apply their writing skills to straightforward texts of varying lengths in the following contexts at Level 2:

- Articles
- Narratives
- Explanations
- Reports

Please note that for the Writing component, learners must not have access to external aids in relation to spelling, punctuation and grammar. This includes dictionaries, spelling, and grammar checking software.

Further guidance on different writing composition formats is provided in 'Teaching Guidance' section below.

Additional Teaching Guidance

1. Scope of Study

The table below shows a breakdown of the skills by SoS across all three components: Reading, Writing, and Speaking, Listening and Communicating. For Writing Composition SoS23 – SoS28, we have included a single word or phrase in brackets that provides a quick handle on what that SoS is about. Writing is assessed by asking the learners to write two texts of different purpose, audience and format. SoS23 – SoS28 are used to assess the overall written composition for each learner's written work.

Learning component	Scope of Study (SoS)
Speaking, Listening and Communication	SoS1. Identify relevant information from extended explanations or presentations.
	SoS2. Follow narratives and lines of argument.
	SoS3. Respond effectively to detailed or extended questions and feedback.
	SoS4. Make requests and ask detailed and pertinent questions to obtain specific information in a range of contexts.
	SoS5. Communicate information, ideas and opinions clearly and effectively, providing further detail and development if required.
	SoS6. Express opinions and arguments and support them with relevant and persuasive evidence.
	SoS7. Use language that is effective, accurate and appropriate to context and situation.
	SoS8. Make relevant and constructive contributions to move discussion forward.
	SoS9. Adapt contributions to discussions to suit audience, purpose and medium.
	SoS10. Interject and redirect discussion using appropriate language and register.
Reading	SoS11. Identify the different situations when the main points are sufficient and when it is important to have specific details
	SoS12. Compare information, ideas and opinions in different texts, including how they are conveyed
	SoS13. Identify implicit and inferred meaning in texts
	SoS14. Understand the relationship between textual features and devices, and how they can be used to shape meaning for different audiences and purposes

	SoS15. Use a range of reference materials and appropriate resources (e.g. glossaries, legends/keys) for different purposes, including to find the meanings of words in straightforward and complex sources
	SoS16. Understand organisational features and use them to locate relevant information in a range of straightforward and complex sources
	SoS17. Analyse texts, of different levels of complexity, recognising their use of vocabulary and identifying levels of formality and bias
	SoS18. Follow an argument, identifying different points of view and distinguishing fact from opinion
	SoS19. Identify different styles of writing and writer's voice
Writing	**<u>Writing Composition</u>** SoS23 ***(clarity)*** Communicate information, ideas and opinions clearly, coherently and effectively.
	SoS24 ***(detail)*** Write text of an appropriate level of detail and of appropriate length to meet the needs of purpose and audience.
	SoS25 **(format)** Organise writing for different purposes using appropriate format and structure.
	SoS26 ***(visual organisation)*** Convey clear meaning and establish cohesion using organisational markers effectively.
	SoS27 ***(register/ language)*** Use different language and register suited to audience.
	SoS28 ***(construction)*** Construct complex sentences consistently and accurately, using paragraphs where appropriate.
	<u>Spelling, punctuation and grammar</u> SoS20 Punctuate writing correctly using a wide range of punctuation markers
	SoS21 Use correct grammar and modality devices
	SOS22. Spell words use in work, study and daily life including a range of specialist words

2. Writing Formats (Writing Component)

Format Required	Letter	Formal Report	Newspaper Article	Email	Leaflet
3 marks	• Sender's address (without name) • Recipient address • Date • Salutation & matching close followed by name of sender	• Appropriate title • Appropriate sub-headings Any one of the following formatting features • Numbered sections • Bullet points • Progressive indentation	• Appropriate title • Attribution • Strapline • Sub-heading(s)	• To (email address) • Subject • Appropriate salutation and close • Name of sender at end	• Appropriate title • Sub-headings • Sections / paragraphs • Contact details

2 marks	• Sender's address (with or without name) and any two of the following formatting features • Recipient address • Date • Salutation & matching close followed by name of sender	• Appropriate title and any two of the following formatting features • Appropriate sub-heading(s) • Numbered sections • Bullet points • Progressive indentation	• Appropriate title and any two of the following formatting features • Attribution • Strapline • Sub-heading(s)	• To (email address) and any two from • Subject • Appropriate salutation and close • Name of sender at end	• Appropriate title and any two of the following formatting features • Sub-headings • Sections/paragraphs • Contact details

1 mark	• Sender's address (with or without name) only	• Appropriate title	• Appropriate title	• To (email address)	• Appropriate title
0 marks	No attempt at formatting or incorrect format used or no sender's address (with or without name)	No attempt at formatting or incorrect format used or no title.	No attempt at formatting or incorrect format used or no title.	No attempt at formatting or incorrect format used or no inclusion of who the email is to.	No attempt at formatting or incorrect format used or no sender's address (with or without name)

3. Glossary for use with this Subject Content[1]

Appropriate	Describes a text, word or style that is suitably phrased for its intended audience and form. 'Appropriate' accepts that different contexts require different treatments and is in this respect to be differentiated from 'correct', which is more concerned with the right grammatical formulation of an expression.
Basic information	Includes factual information such as personal details, and everyday situations such as directions, weather etc.
Context	The purpose and audience for which spoken or written language is used.
Formal	Formal language tends to be characterised by more elaborate grammatical structures and sophisticated language, and is typically used to convey a more serious tone (e.g. receive rather than get, gratuity rather than tip).
Format	The way in which a text is arranged or presented, e.g. as a book, leaflet, essay, film/animation, audiotape, or the way in which it is structured, e.g. the use made of headings, subheadings, diagrams/photographs with captions.
Gist	The main point or idea of a text. Reading for gist is thus reading for identification of the main points only.
Common words	Words that occur frequently; someone who is unable to read or spell these words will therefore be at a disadvantage. A number of attempts have been made (notably by Dolch) to identify those words that students most need to acquire in order to advance in their learning.
Linking words	Words used to link sentences and to show the relationship between information or ideas. Linking words can be used to show a sequence (e.g. first, next, finally), results (e.g. therefore, so) and addition (e.g. and, also).
Medium	The way in which language is transmitted from one person, or an agency, to another. The three basic media of language are phonic (speech), graphic (writing) and signing (sign 18 language for the hearing impaired). The term is also used to denote the means of communication (e.g. television, telephone, film, radio, computer, press).
Narrative	Describes text that re-tells events, often in chronological sequence.
Organisational features	Refers to those visual aspects of text that give a clue to its status and to its relation to other pieces of text. Such features include: contents pages, chapter headings and other sub-headings, bullet-point lists, captions to photographs and illustrations, text presented in special display boxes, tables, footnotes, indexes, etc. Reading This is decoding and establishing the meaning of written text.

[1] DfE – Subject content functional skills: English. February 2018. Pp17-19

Registers	A variety of language selected for use in a specific social situation. In particular, the register differentiates formal from informal use of language.
Regular	A term used to describe words, typically verbs and nouns, that conform to general rules. It is possible to predict the plural form of a regular noun, or the simple past and past participle forms of a regular verb; it is not possible to do so with irregular nouns and verbs.
Sentence	In writing, sentences are marked by using a capital letter at the beginning, and a full stop (or question mark or exclamation mark) at the end. A simple sentence consists of a single clause with a single subject. A compound sentence consists of more than one subject or more than one independent clause. A complex sentence consists of a main clause and one or more subordinate clauses (e.g. Although it was late, I wasn't tired).
Short	Denotes words, sentences and texts of such a length as to be accessible to students and to enable them to experience 19 a sense of achievement at having successfully decoded them. Short and long are terms which are also applied to vowel sounds. A short text is typically used to communicate everyday or functional information such as in notices, announcements, instructions, messages and invitations.
Simple	When applied to narratives, words or sentences, this means a basic, uncomplicated structure. A simple sentence structure, for example, follows the standard pattern of subject, verb and, optionally, object; a simple narrative will follow a chronological sequence and be told from one viewpoint only.
Specialist words	Specialist words are those that have a specific meaning within a certain context, such as words related to a specific job or work environment, a pastime or hobby, or a certain area of study.
Straightforward	Describes subjects and materials that students often meet in their work, studies or other activities. Straightforward content is put across in a direct way with the main points easily identifiable; usually the sentence structures of such texts consist of more than one subject or more than one independent clause (i.e. compound sentence), and students will be familiar with the vocabulary. Straightforward texts are more demanding than simple texts containing simple sentence structure. The vocabulary of straightforward texts will typically consist of a range of familiar and common words, and some specialist words.
Style	Style can be defined as the selection of certain linguistic features in relation to context (audience and purpose), e.g. formal or informal, non-specialist or technical. All language users have the opportunity to make linguistic choices that will determine the style of a piece of writing or an utterance.

Delivering this Qualification

Becoming a Provider

To deliver this qualification you must be a recognised Open Awards provider. For more information, visit our website or contact the team on 0151 494 2072.

How to Deliver

You can deliver this qualification by completing a New Qualification Request Form via the Portal.

You will be required to provide details of the staffing and resources you have in place for the delivery of Functional Skills qualifications and to confirm you can fulfil the requirements of this Quaification Guide and supporting policies.

For more information, see the Provider Handbook, or contact the team on 0151 494 2072.

Registering Learners

Once you are approve to deliver this qualification, you will need to register your learners in line with the timescales below:

Short courses (15 weeks or less) within 25 working days of the course start date. Full year long courses (over 15 weeks) within 60 working days of the course start date.

You will need to register your learners via the Open Awards Portal using the Learner Registration Form (LRF). Please ensure all learner details are provided to avoid delays to your learner registrations being processed. Learner Registrations Forms can be submitted by the Provider Admin Contact.

If an end-date for the course is not provided, the Functional Skills registration will last for a period of two years.

Once your learners are registered, you will be able to schedule assessments via the XAMS assessment platform.

Identification Requirements and Learner Authenticity

Providers must have systems in place to ensure that an individual completing an assessment is the person they are claiming to be.

It is a provider's responsibility to confirm the identity of a learner as part of its registration process. You may do this by requesting sufficient personal data and a unique learner number (ULN) to ensure the learner can be clearly and uniquely identified.

The use of a ULN is a mandatory requirement for publicly funded education and when submitting Individualised Learner Record (ILR) returns.

Providers are required to ensure that each learner's identification is checked and that the type of identification provided by each learner is recorded before assessments are undertaken. Open Awards' Quality Assurance team will check this record during quality assurance monitoring activities.

The following are permitted proof of a learner's Identity:

- a valid passport (any nationality);
- a signed UK photo card driving licence;
- valid warrant card issued by HM Forces or the Police;
- other photographic ID card, e.g. employee ID card (must be current employer), student ID card, travel card; OR
- UK biometric residence permit

If an assessment is taking place in a learner's place of work and a learner is unable to supply any of the above, authentication of a learner's identity by a third-party representative, for example his/her line manager or a member of his/her workplace Human Resources Team can be accepted.

Scheduling Assessments

Learners must be registered in accordance with Open Awards policy prior to scheduling learners for a Functional Skills assessment.

Once the learner has been registered, their assessments (Reading, Writing and SLC) can be scheduled via the XAMS assessment platform.

For online assessments, providers can set their own dates/time for assessments. Providers can schedule up to 24 hours before the set assessment date/time. The assessment will be available for the learner to sit at any time on the scheduled date.

Paper-based assessments are available on two set days every six (6) weeks. All learners at the provider must sit the same subject and level on the same day. A calendar of available dates is published at the beginning of each academic year and will be made available on our website. Providers can schedule learners up to 15 working days before the set assessment date.

Please see our XAMS User Guidance on the Portal for further information.

Once scheduled, you cannot change the date or time of the assessment. Providers can, however, withdraw the learner from the scheduled assessment and re-schedule within the timescales outlined above.

Quality Assurance and Standardisation

Delivery of this qualification must be in accordance with Ofqual regulatory guidelines and in line with Open Awards' quality assurance processes.

Provider Staff Requirements

Providers are responsible for ensuring that their staff are occupationally competent and have access to appropriate training and support. They are also responsible for notifying Open Awards of staff changes.

To deliver our Functional Skills qualifications Open Awards expects that you have appropriate staff in place to fulfil the following essential roles:

- Tutor/Teacher
- Marker (Reading and Writing)
- Assessor (SLC)
- Internal Quality Assurer
- Invigilator
- Administrator

These roles must be covered by a minimum of 2 separate individuals to avoid potential or actual conflicts of interest. For more information, please see our Conflicts of Interest Policy available on the Portal.

In addition, it is Open Awards expectation that staff at providers meet the following minimum requirement:

- Tutors have relevant teaching experience and/or a qualification, and experience and/or a qualification in the relevant subject area, as a minimum at a level above that being taught

  Although not mandatory, best practice would be for Assessors to hold the relevant D32/D33/A1/AQA unit(s) and Level 3 Award in Education and Training. Likewise, best practice would be for Internal Verifiers to hold the relevant D34/V1/IQA unit(s)

- For the roles of Marker, Invigilator and Assessor, staff will be required to complete Open Awards' internal training before the first assessment, and ongoing standardisation. Please visit our website for more information on upcoming training and events.

- For the role of the administrator, providers must ensure that the confidentiality and security of assessments is maintained at all times.

Administration includes initial receipt of confidential materials, secure storage, movement and preparation of materials for scheduled assessments, and registration, secure storage and return of materials to the awarding organisation after scheduled exams are completed.

No tutor of a Functional Skills qualification can be involved in the invigilation or administration of the assessment materials for Level 1 and 2 assessments in that subject, regardless of the level they teach. Nobody with a vested interest in the outcome of the assessment may be involved in the administration or invigilation.

External Assessment (Reading and Writing)

Assessment of Level 2 Functional Skills in English is through three externally set and marked assessments: reading; writing and Speaking, Listening and Communicating.

Reading and Writing assessments are externally set and externally marked.

On-screen assessments for Reading and Writing components are completed via the XAMS assessment platform. Learners' answers are uploaded at the end of the assessment and allocated to Open Awards' marking teams.

For paper-based assessment, once completed, external assessments must be returned to Open Awards by secure postage. This includes any scripts that were not attempted for any reason. For full guidance on returning completed scripts, please refer to the cover sheet and instructions included with the assessment pack received.

Providers must ensure that assessments are carried out in controlled conditions to minimise the potential for plagiarism and to ensure security of the assessment materials. In order to ensure these conditions are enforced external assessments must be delivered in accordance with our policy, Instructions for Conducting Controlled Assessments or Instructions for Conducting Controlled Assessments Remotely, available on the Portal.

Open Awards permits remote invigilation of Functional Skills assessments. Providers must apply in advance of the first assessment via the Portal if they intend to administer assessments remotely. Open Awards also provides a remote invigilation service. Open Awards invigilated assessments can be scheduled via the XAMS assessment platform by choosing this option from the drop-down. Prices associated with utilising Open Awards' invigilators are published in our Pricing Information.

Invigilator reports must be completed for every assessment and retained in line with Open Awards' Instructions for Conducting Controlled Assessments (Remotely), and made available to Open Awards external quality assurance team on request.

Providers must ensure that there are no conflicts of interest between the invigilator and learners by checking in advance of the assessment. This invigilator(s) **must not** be the same Functional Skills tutor used for the delivery of the relevant Functional Skills course the learner, or group of learners, is undertaking the assessment for unless this is required as a reasonable adjustment for a specific learner or group of learners. In this case, a request for a reasonable adjustment should be made to Open Awards in advance of the assessment.

Internal Assessment (SLC)

The Speaking, Listening and Communicating component is assessed internally in line with set requirements using Open Awards' approved assessment materials. A provider can devise their own SLC tasks but these must be submitted to Open Awards in advance for approval. For more information, please see 'Setting Provider Devised SLC Assessment Tasks' guidance available on the Portal.

Providers must ensure that these assessments are carried out in controlled conditions in accordance with our policy: Instructions for Conducting Controlled Assessments or Instructions for Conducting Controlled Assessments Remotely, available on the Portal.

Providers **must** provide this assessment criterion to their learner in advance of the SLC assessment. The criteria can be distributed as a handout to learner (shown as an appendix in the SLC assessment materials for the assessor) or providers can choose to display the criteria on a notice board.

Providers are required to complete and retain a record of learner achievement form which clearly specifies how the learner has met the assessment criteria, any visual recordings, and any additional evidence requirements for every learner. Providers are required to upload records of achievement and recordings to their allocated SharePoint folder for externally quality assurance.

Providers are required to keep all evidence related to SLC for a minimum of 3 years.

Storing Confidential Materials

Question papers and any other confidential material, e.g. answer booklets, must be stored securely at the provider's registered address in a safe or secure lockable cupboard with restricted access in a secure locked room. The contents of all materials must be treated as strictly confidential and should not be shared with anyone other than those taking or administering the assessment. Copies may not be issued to anyone, including teaching staff. Open Awards must be notified immediately if any known or suspected infringement of these conditions takes place. Should the provider be found responsible for compromising the security of the assessment then they may be charged for redevelopment costs.

External Quality Assurance

External quality assurance includes the following activity:

- Sampling of marking decisions at a provider
- Provider performance review of results at task/question/assessment level
- Annual quality compliance visits/activity
- Unannounced and short-notice visits and spot checks; and
- Reviews of administration, reports, and internal quality assurance activities.

External quality assurance will ensure that:

- all learners' assessment responses are rigorously and fairly marked within agreed timescales;
- Open Awards receives accurate information about learner performance;
- marking is consistent and that required sampling takes place across the quality assurance team;
- item level performance can be monitored on an ongoing basis across a range of providers to provide early feedback on the effectiveness of questions and mark schemes;
- any anomalies in marking decisions can be identified and addressed early on and measures put in place to provide further training and support to a provider and improve their marking performance;
- risk ratings can be constantly reviewed and amended (either increased or decreased) at any time to reflect a change in the risks presented by a provider.

In addition, with regards to SLC, the external quality assurance monitoring visit will:

- ensure that assessment and internal verification arrangements are fit for purpose and are being delivered in accordance with the requirements specified for each SLC assessment task;
- ensure the provider is taking all reasonable steps to prevent the occurrence of malpractice or maladministration;
- confirm that assessments are conducted by appropriately qualified and occupationally expert Assessors;
- sample previously conducted Speaking, Listening and Communicating assessment records and interview learners both in progress and having completed;
- ensure that provider staff have access to up-to-date versions of:
- SLC Assessment Tasks & Assessment Documentation
- Setting Provider Devised SLC Assessment Tasks

Unannounced and Short-notice Visits

Open Awards operates a system of unannounced and short-notice visits in order to ensure that providers are complying with the rules set out within this specification, and associated policies, around the delivery of assessments. These visits ensure ongoing confidence in the qualification as well as maintaining and improving quality and standards. Such checks will create the opportunity to comment on good practice and to identify areas for improvement.

Guidance on unannounced and short-notice visits is available via the Portal.

External Marking and Results

All external assessments are marked by qualified Open Awards markers.

Standardisation and marker checks are carried out regularly to ensure quality of marking. This includes second-marking and sampling by a Lead Marker in line with Open Awards sampling policy.

Following completion of the marking process, learners' results will be available to the provider through the XAMS assessment platform.

Results for on-screen assessments will be available within a maximum of 16 working days from the date the assessment was taken and within 27 working days for paper-based assessments.

For newly released assessment versions, the maximum time a provider/ learner will wait for results to be issued is 32 working days. This additional time is to allow for the awarding process where specific pass marks are set for each assessment version.

For Reading and Writing assessments, learners will receive a feedback report on their performance against the subject content that was assessed. This is available for providers to download via the results screen in the XAMS assessment platform.

SLC results will be confirmed in the XAMS assessment platform once external quality assurance activities have been completed. Providers must not communicate the expected result to learners before Open Awards has confirmed the result.

Resits

Learners are permitted to resit an external assessment where they are issued a fail result. Resit charges will apply.

Providers are responsible for preparing their learners for the assessment and should ensure that the approach to resits is appropriate. Learners should be discouraged from repeated resits and be provided with further teaching and learning to support successful achievement of the qualifications where learners have not passed the assessment.

A learner can be re-scheduled for a resit in the XAMS assessment platform after a period of two weeks from the time that a 'fail' result is released. This is to ensure that learners receive further teaching and learning and that they are fully prepared for the resit.

Please note, providers should not re-schedule an assessment until results have been received and it is confirmed that a learner has failed an assessment attempt.

If a learner has had three (3) attempts and not yet passed, please contact us on 0151 494 2072 or quality@openawards.org.uk to discuss this with the Quality Assurance team before scheduling a fourth attempt.

Enquiries and Appeals

Providers and learners have the right to appeal against the results issued. Providers must ensure that learners are made aware of this.

There are three stages of appeal depending on the nature of the decision at each stage:

- Enquiry (Stage 1)
- Appeal (Stage 2)
- Independent Appeals Review (Stage 3)

Each stage must be completed before progressing to the next stage.

More information can be found in Open Awards Policy for Enquiries and Appeals found on our website.

Verification and Standardisation

Verification is the process by which assessment decisions are confirmed. Providers delivering this qualification have a responsibility to conduct internal verification led by a trained internal verifier.

Provider approval compliance monitoring and external verification is carried out by Open Awards Quality Reviewers/External Verifiers who will confirm that the provider is assessing to the required standard and ensure that there are robust quality assurance systems embedded.

Further guidance on Internal Verification and Training Support for providers can be found in the Provider Handbook.

Providers are required to contribute to national standardisation as requested by Open Awards and to carry out appropriate internal standardisation. Open Awards offers standardisation events that are held throughout the year. Such events will also provide an opportunity to identify and share best practice. Up to date details of training and standardisation events can be found on our website.

Internal standardisation involves ensuring that, where there is more than one tutor/assessor delivering Open Awards provision or at more than one site, internally set tasks and the outcomes of internal assessment are consistent across the range of courses.

Provider Monitoring

Providers delivering Functional Skills Maths at Levels 1 and 2 will receive an annual quality compliance visit. This will include a check of policies, procedures and controls for ensuring the provider undertakes the delivery, invigilation and administration of assessments in line with guidance and policies provided.

Providers are required to schedule all assessments to enable Open Awards to complete observations of on-screen and online assessments, unannounced visits and spot-checks.

Further guidance on training and support is available, please speak to your Open Awards' Quality and Standards Advisor.

Providers are required to contribute to national training and standardisation events as requested by Open Awards and also to carry out appropriate internal standardisation and/or peer observations for tutors involved in the delivery of Functional Skills.

Open Awards offers training and standardisation events that are held throughout the year. Such events will also provide an opportunity to identify and share best practice. Up to date details of training and standardisation events can be found on our website.

Appendices and Links

Appendix Name
Complaints Policy
Enquiries and Appeals Policy
Equality and Diversity Policy
Invoicing Policy
Privacy Policy
Provider Handbook
Reasonable Adjustments and Special Considerations Policy
XAMS Guidance

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