

What are they?

Functional Skills are practical skills in English, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT). It is the intention that individuals, who have passed the functional learning skills will be able to participate and progress in education, training and employment.

Who are they for?

They are being developed for all learners aged 14 and above. The qualifications will be available at entry levels 1, 2 and 3, level 1 and level 2. These are allocated different points:

- Level 2 = 23 points (equivalent in size to half a GCSE)
- Level 1 = 12.5 points
- Entry 3 = 7 points
- Entry 2 = 6 points
- Entry 1 = 7 points

The functional skills assessments will be open to Year 9s and above to take assessments at appropriate level.

The functional skills qualification will be widely available, for example in schools, colleges and workplaces. If you want to know what is required of the learner to pass the functional skills at different levels in each standard a set of functional skills standards for English, mathematics and ICT can be downloaded at: www.qca.org.uk/functionalskills

How does it fit with other qualifications?

To ensure functional skills will be readily accessible to the full range of learners, they will be available as:

- stand-alone qualifications;
- a component of Diplomas and Apprenticeships; and
- incorporated into the revised GCSE specifications for English, mathematics and ICT.

They will replace:

- skills for Life qualifications (literacy, numeracy, ICT as Sfl); and
- key skills qualifications (Communication, Application of Number and ICT).

Both 'skills for Life' and 'key skills qualifications' will be available for new candidates until at least August 2010. This allows accreditation until August 2012. The exact timetable for replacement will be confirmed on evidence from the trials.

Functional Learning Skills

GCSEs

From teaching in 2010 (accreditation in 2012) the learner must achieve level 2 functional skills to achieve an A*-C grade at GCSE in English, mathematics and ICT.

Assessment of functional skills will be through a stand alone test but the teaching and learning of functional skills can be through discrete lesson to fully embedding into teaching and learning of the relevant GCSE. It is expected that the majority of learners will study for both the functional skills and GCSE.

There are no plans to introduce a level 1 functional skills requirement into achieving GCSEs at grades D-G. Learners will be able to take the functional skills assessment either before, alongside or after their GCSE examinations.

Diplomas

Functional skills are an essential component of the Diplomas. Students must achieve Level 1 functional skills for a Foundation Diploma and Level 2 functional skills for the Higher (level 2 and Advanced (level 3) Diplomas.

Apprenticeships

The intention is that functional skills will replace key skills in apprenticeships from 2010 although key skills will still be available for new candidates until at least August 2010 and will be accredited until 2010.

Foundation Learning Tier

The Entry level functional skills qualifications will provide a progression route from Entry levels 1, 2 and 3 through to Levels 1 and 2.

A range of assessment methods are being trialled at the moment including electronic and on-screen approaches. The assessments will be based primarily on task-based scenario questions and for a limited time and delivered in a controlled environment. The assessments will use and reinforce skill based and problem-solving techniques. They will be assessed pass or fail. They will be separately certificated.

When and Where are functional skills being piloted in Northamptonshire?

Functional Skills are being piloted from September 2007 until September 2010 for first teaching in 2010.

All consortium that are delivering Diplomas in Northamptonshire will be teaching Functional Skills

That includes:

- Northampton Schools for Girls;
- Latimer Arts College;
- The Ferrers;
- Prince William; and
- Manor School.

These schools are piloting Functional Skills from September 2008:

- Weston Favell School;
- Abbeyfield School;
- Danetre School;
- Chenderit School; and
- Magdalen School.

Evaluation

An evaluation of the functional skills pilot programme and wider analysis of skills delivery across England, Wales and Northern Ireland will take place. These will inform:

- recommendations on the implementation of functional skills qualifications;
- other approaches to skills acquisition in skill based qualifications; and
- the relationship between functional skills, key skills and basic skills.

For More Information on Functional Skills

Website Links

www.excellence.qia.org.uk/functionalskills
www.qca.org.uk/functionalskills

Email address

functionalskills@qca.org.uk

This document will be updated as more information from the pilots is known.

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