

## **How to prepare candidates for Assessments**

### Learning and Teaching

It is essential that candidates are fully prepared in all aspects of the Skills Standards for Functional Skills before they are assessed. Candidates should only be scheduled for their final assessment when staff in centres judge they have a realistic chance of success, based on their performance in learning and teaching and in practice activities.

Some centres use diagnostic tools in the form of practice questions that help identify specific areas of weakness in each candidate's skills. This approach can help tutors tailor their learning programmes for individual candidates, so that they target development towards any gaps or weaknesses in their skills.

Centres can use their own learning and teaching materials, or they can select from the wide range of published support materials for Functional Skills that are available on websites or from hard copy published sources. It is for the centre to decide which approach and which resources are best for their candidates.

### Exam Technique

Some of your candidates may not have had good experiences of exams in the past, or it may be some time since they faced a formal assessment of this sort. It may therefore be worth taking time to give your candidates some basic advice on exam technique. In particular, candidates should be told:

- you must read each question very carefully and answer the question fully;
- pay close attention to the number of marks available for each question as this may help you to predict the length of answer required and the number of points you need to make or the number of stages there may be in a question involving problem solving;
- take account of the time allowance for the assessment and allocate time for each question;
- if you get stuck on a question, move on, you can always come back to it if you have time at the end;
- in Maths assessments, it is essential that you clearly show all of your working and that you give clear explanations with your answers, where required;
- try to leave time at the end of the assessment to go back and check over your answers.

### Familiarity with the e-assessment software

In this Functional Skills section of the SQA website, we provide sample assessments for English and Maths, which allow candidates to test their knowledge and skills and to become familiar with the software used for the assessment before being scheduled for their formal assessment. These sample assessments can be used without limit and offer candidates the opportunity of experiencing an online assessment in a risk free environment. Candidates should use these sample materials to become familiar with all key aspects of the software including: the look and layout of questions on screen; the navigation tools for moving back and forth between questions; the way graphics open and close; and the calculator and 'drag and drop' type questions they may face in Maths.

In this section of the website, we also provide practice assessment tasks for ICT, which must be completed using the simulated applications (i.e. Word Processor, Spreadsheet, Browser, etc) that candidates will use in their formal assessment. It is particularly important in the case of ICT, that candidates take time to work on these practice tasks and become familiar with the functionality of the simulated applications, as some of the functions and features may be different from applications they are used to using.