

SQA Functional Skills Handbook



English, Mathematics, and Information
and Communication Technology (ICT)
at Levels 1 and 2

About SQA

Functional Skills



SQA is an established awarding organisation with a global reputation for quality and service. We are Ofqual recognised and have a growing range of qualifications on the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF).

Functional Skills Process



Functional Skills qualifications equip learners with the practical skills that are required in everyday life, education and the workplace.

SQA offers Functional Skills qualifications in English, Mathematics, and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) at Levels 1 and 2. They are suitable for a wide range of learners (from age 14 upwards) and can be offered as stand-alone qualifications or as components of apprenticeships.

The qualification specifications for [English](#), [Maths](#) and [ICT](#), outlining what they cover, are on the [Functional Skills](#) subject pages of our website www.sqa.org.uk/functionalskills

Assessment of Functional Skills is set by SQA, delivered on-screen using our SOLAR e-assessment system and then centrally marked by us. The exception to this is English, where the Speaking, Listening and Communication component is delivered and marked by the centre using controlled assessment.

Our Functional Skills portfolio

You will need to use the relevant SQA codes when seeking qualification approval and/or entering candidates for qualifications. These are the codes for the Functional Skills qualifications offered by SQA:

Functional Skills qualification	Assessment type	Ofqual code	SQA code
English at Level 1		600/1781/8	*GC9P 21
Reading component	on-screen		FP1R 21
Writing component	on-screen		FP1N 21
Speaking, Listening & Communication component	controlled		FP1T 21
English at Level 2		600/1782/X	*GC9R 22
Reading component	on-screen		FP1H 22
Writing component	on-screen		FP1J 22
Speaking, Listening & Communication component	controlled		FP1L 22
Functional Skills qualification	Assessment type	Ofqual code	SQA code
Mathematics at Level 1		600/1956/6	*GC9T 21
Mathematics component	on-screen		FP1V 21
Mathematics at Level 2		600/1957/8	*GC9V 22
Mathematics component	on-screen		FP1X 22
Functional Skills qualification	Assessment type	Ofqual code	SQA code
Information and Communication Technology (ICT) at Level 1		600/4076/2	*GE6D 21
ICT component	on-screen		H09H 21
Information and Communication Technology (ICT) at Level 2		600/4077/4	*GE6E 22
ICT component	on-screen		H09L 22

* This Group Award code must be entered along with the specific Unit code/s. Failure to include the Group Award code could impact on certification.

Delivering Functional Skills

Approval process

To deliver SQA Functional Skills qualifications you must become an SQA approved centre and gain SQA qualification approval to offer Functional Skills qualifications.

SQA centre approval

The SQA centre approval process checks that your centre has the management structure and [quality assurance](#) systems in place to support the assessment and internal verification of our qualifications.

If your centre is already approved by another awarding organisation, centre approval may be granted by the SQA Recognition Route.

SQA qualification approval

The second stage checks that your centre has, for example, the necessary staff skills, equipment and accommodation you will need to deliver and assess the Functional Skills qualification that you plan to offer. We will also check your internal verification system to ensure it meets our quality requirements.

If your centre already offers Functional Skills with another awarding organisation, SQA qualification approval may be granted by the SQA Recognition Route.

Applying for approval

When you contact us, you will be given a dedicated Regional

Manager, who can advise and guide you through our approval process, as well as helping with any questions you may have about SQA and our Functional Skills portfolio.

Candidate registrations and entries

Before you deliver SQA Functional Skills qualifications, you must register your candidates, and then enter them for the relevant qualifications.

All SQA approved centres will be set up to register and record candidate entries using our online data transfer system, SQA Connect. We offer training and technical support for all centres using this system. Further details and training materials are available at www.sqa.org.uk/sqaconnect

Candidate registration process

Before candidates can undertake a qualification, your centre must first register their information to create an SQA candidate record. Each candidate will be allocated a nine-digit candidate number called an SCN. The SCN is unique to the individual and is used for all SQA qualifications for which they may be entered. A candidate will only be allocated one SCN as this record will hold details of all his or her SQA achievements for life. Candidates must be entered at least five

working days before their assessment date.

Candidate qualification entry

Once candidates are registered via SQA Connect, they can be entered for any of the qualifications that your centre is approved to offer.

Candidate entries will automatically appear in your centre's SOLAR account (see page 5 for more details on SOLAR). This saves you administration, time and effort. Once this happens you can schedule the assessments on SOLAR.

Functional Skills are challenging qualifications. The assessments are delivered online, and candidates must be familiar with this approach before undertaking their assessment. Please read the guidance online. This will ensure that you and your candidates are prepared.

Solid preparation will maximise your candidates' chances of success. Please make use of the [sample assessments](#) available on our website, and the range of support materials that is available.

In particular, the ICT assessments use a simulated environment, and it is essential that candidates familiarise themselves with this. Our partner, [Tribal](#), offers online initial assessment to identify individual learning needs, and can provide resources to help learners develop and achieve Functional Skills.

Functional Skills English

assessment support packs are available to help with assessment of the Speaking, Listening and Communication component.

It is important that candidates have completed the full syllabus before they sit the assessments.

Delivering assessments using SOLAR e-assessment

SOLAR is SQA's online assessment system. It is secure and straightforward to use. You will be set up with a SOLAR account as part of the approval process.

You can schedule Functional Skills e-assessments in SOLAR so that you can set the most convenient day and time for candidates to undertake the e-assessment.

When an e-assessment is scheduled, a unique keycode is generated by the system for each candidate. Please note that key codes are normally issued 5 days before the scheduled assessment.

Technical requirements

You need a computer that is connected to the internet to access an assessment. The assessment can either be taken on this computer or copied to a laptop or memory stick to be taken offline, using a small, locally-installed application called SecureClient.

It is important to ensure that **assessments taken offline using SecureClient** are uploaded to SecureAssess, to be marked, as soon as an internet connection is available. Assessments left on local machines and USB drives for extended periods are at greater risk of being lost before they have been submitted. This process needs to be completed within 30 days of the assessment schedule closing (as set by you in SOLAR). Otherwise, it may not be possible to retrieve a completed candidate assessment attempt. Any delay in uploading assessments could have an impact on marking and certification.

If you discover offline assessments that have not been uploaded within the 30-day period, you should contact SQA immediately. It may still be possible to retrieve them at this stage but an administrative charge may be applied. Contact solar@sqa.org.uk if you need help with this.

The PCs/laptops used for the Functional Skills e-assessments must have the appropriate version of Flash player installed. The minimum versions required for browsers are:

- Internet Explorer — 10.1
- Firefox — 10.0
- Safari — 10.1

The minimum screen resolution for delivery of an e-assessment in SOLAR is 1024 x 768. Resolutions below the minimum requirement may result in the e-assessment failing to display properly.

SQA strongly recommends these requirements before running a live assessment. The **Assessment Checklist** on our website should be used to ensure you have made all necessary technical preparations.

Interactive training materials to help centres administer and invigilate assessments through SOLAR are available at www.sqasolar.org.uk

Technical support is also available by contacting the SOLAR helpdesk at solar@sqa.org.uk or on **0345 270 1213** from 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday. Outside these hours, please e-mail solar@sqa.org.uk and we will respond to your query at the earliest availability the next working day.

Invigilation

SOLAR provides a number of features to support and enhance centres' existing **invigilation procedures**. A keycode will be provided to candidates, but the invigilator will need to 'unlock' the e-assessment to enable the candidate to begin. More information on this is available in the Invigilation section of the SOLAR training materials.

Achieving Functional Skills

Transfer of components from another awarding organisation

The Functional Skills qualifications in English at Levels 1 and 2 consist of three separately assessed components. To achieve the full Functional Skills qualification in English, the candidate must achieve all three components. The three components can be achieved separately during different months. However, certification will not take place until all three components have been passed.

If a candidate has achieved one or two components with another awarding organisation, the passes may be transferred to SQA to enable the candidate to be entered for the remaining components.

Evidence of the achieved components will be required.

Scheduling assessments

Assessments can be taken at any time, on- or off-line.



Technical support will be available from SQA from 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday, except SQA public holidays.

Candidates will sit the e-assessments at times scheduled by their centre, under appropriate conditions, with **Invigilators** present at all times.

The Speaking, Listening and Communication component of English is internally assessed through controlled assessment in the centre. The assessment for this component takes place whenever the assessor deems it appropriate.

Internal and external verification

Assessment of the English Speaking, Listening and Communication component will be carried out by the centre. Assessment decisions verified by your centre through your existing quality assurance procedures will be subject to external verification by SQA.

We have developed examples of the approaches to assessment for this component to help you to develop appropriate instruments of assessment. These are available through our website.

We strongly recommend that you seek prior approval for any instruments of assessment you develop (we call this 'prior verification'). To submit materials for prior verification, please use the Centre Prior

Verification Request Form on our website www.sqa.org.uk/priorverification. We will respond within six weeks.

Access and fair assessment

As an SQA approved centre, you must ensure that all candidates have equal and fair access to assessment. This may involve making reasonable adjustments to Functional Skills assessment arrangements in accordance with requirements set by the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) and Ofqual. See SQA's website for instructions on [delivering Functional Skills assessments](#).

Marking and results submission

Marking process

Standardisation and marker checks are carried out to ensure the quality of marking.

Following completion of the marking process, candidates' results will be available to you through SQA Connect.

Submission of English Speaking, Listening and Communication results

Once candidates have sat the internally-assessed component, you should submit the results using SQA Connect. Further details and support are available at www.sqa.org.uk/sqaconnect

Certification and results reporting

Results reporting

Results for [external assessments](#) will be available to centres on SQA Connect within four weeks of the end of the month in which the candidate sat the assessment. You can view the [Results and Certification schedule](#) on SQA's website.

Candidate resits

Candidates can technically be scheduled to resit the assessment once their results have been confirmed. However, we advise you to ensure that candidates receive the support and guidance they require to make sure that they are ready to resit. Please refer to the online guidance on preparing candidates for assessment.

Certification process and timetable

Certificates will be sent to the address that you gave us in the candidate registration process (unless subsequently updated) four weeks after the end of the month in which the assessment is taken. You should register candidates care of the centre address if certificates have to be sent to the centre and not direct to the candidate.

For Functional Skills in English, the certificate will be issued once the candidate has achieved a pass for all three components.

Replacements for lost or damaged certificates

If a candidate loses their certificate or needs an extra copy, they can use our Replacement Certificate Service to order a new one. Go to www.sqa.org.uk/replacementcertificates

Appeals

SQA has a robust process for standardising, marking, re-marking and awarding to support our Functional Skills qualifications, but we recognise there may be occasions where a centre wishes to challenge a result.

External Assessment

For external-assessed components, if the centre disagrees with SQA's decision about a candidate, the member of staff in the centre who is responsible for the area should contact the SQA Operations Manager within 10 working days to agree a time to discuss the matter. If, after this discussion, the member of staff is not satisfied, the Head of Centre can raise an appeal. Please refer to page 11 of our [Appeals Process: Information for Centres](#) for more information.



Internal Assessment – English Speaking, Listening and Communication component only

For English Speaking, Listening and Communication only, which is delivered and marked by the centre through controlled assessment, the initial responsibility for appeals lies with the centre. Candidates should be made aware that they can appeal to SQA against the centre's internal assessment decision. Candidates must have exhausted their centre's own appeals process before appealing to SQA, and must be able to provide evidence that they have followed this process. It is expected that candidates will only appeal directly to SQA in exceptional circumstances. Please refer to page 12 of our [Appeals Process: Information for Centres](#) for more information.

Contact **us now**

Contact our Business Development team for more information about Functional Skills qualifications and working with SQA.

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Business Development Team

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