

Key skills qualifications

Information relates to 3638 and any qualification packages including access to key skills qualifications

Levels 1 to 4

This month's *Key skills news* contains the following:

- ICT test level 3-4 data files for 2007-08
- Check out our new functional skills newsletter

Key skills news is published every month and contains all the latest information and updates about the key skills qualifications awarded by City & Guilds.

Key skills news is available via City & Guilds' monthly e-updates. You can sign up to receive the e-newsletter at www.cityandguilds.com/updates (make sure you select the 'General Learning' category).

A full archive of this newsletter is also available from www.key-skills.org.

ICT test level 3-4 data files for 2007-08

QCA has recently refreshed the data files on its website so the appropriate files for all ICT level 3 and 4 tests up until September 2008 are now available. The files are located at www.qca.org.uk/qca_13459.aspx.

You are reminded that **all** of these files should be downloaded and stored locally well in advance of any tests taking place so that candidates have adequate opportunity to become familiar with the forms of data used. **Candidates should not know in advance of a test which particular set of files they will need to work with.**

As in previous years we would urge you to archive all of your existing data files before attempting to download the new files as some will have common folder/file names. Also, each group of files should be located in sub-folders which follow the same names as the scenarios on the website. There is further guidance on the site about accessing and storing these files.

Key skills news...

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Check out our new functional skills newsletter

As we announced in last month's *Key skills news*, the first edition of our new dedicated functional skills newsletter is available from this month. Issue 01 of *Functional skills news* contains information about our proposed fees for the new pilot functional skills awards, along with approval and funding arrangements.

To stay up-to-date, you'll need to sign-up to receive our monthly e-newsletter (if you haven't already done so). To ensure *Functional skills news* is included in your e-mail alert each month (along with *Key skills news*), be sure to select 'General Learning' as one of your interests when completing the form.

More information about our key skills qualifications can be found on this dedicated City & Guilds website: www.key-skills.org

More information about our Literacy/Language/Numeracy (LLN) and ICT skills qualifications can be found on this dedicated City & Guilds website: www.basic-skills.org.uk

To find out about our functional skills pilot, go to www.cityandguilds.com/functionalskills.

Key skills qualifications

Information relates to 3638 and any qualification packages including access to key skills qualifications

Levels 1 to 4

This month's *Key skills news* contains the following:

- Portfolio achievement – what's the position on currency?
- Look out for *Functional skills news* from next month

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Portfolio achievement – what's the position on currency?

We have highlighted on a number of occasions (most recently in Issue 24 of *Key skills news*) that the last certification date for achievement under the 2000 key skills specifications has now passed. Please be aware that any 2000-spec portfolio achievements (eg components 002, 004, 006, etc) can no longer be paired with a key skills test pass to trigger certification. This applies to the 2000-spec components in both 3618 **and** 3638.

We have received a number of queries over the last few weeks about how far apart the gap between achievement of a key skills portfolio and test can be. Normally we would expect both to be achieved within the life of the same three-year key skills registration, although we recognise that sometimes this is not possible.

The position regarding key skills tests is relatively straightforward in that there is no formal shelf life (unlike proxy qualifications used to substitute for a test pass) – in theory, a key skills test pass dating from 2000 could be paired with a key skills portfolio achieved in 2007.

However, the position for key skills portfolios is more complicated given the added complication of the 2000-2004 standards revision.

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Key skills news...



All key skills qualifications awarded after 31 August 2006 **must** confirm achievement of the 2004 key skills standards. In practice, portfolio evidence originally assessed and claimed against the 2000 specs will in most cases also cover the 2004 standards. Nevertheless, the portfolio would still require formal assessor/IV sign-off as 2004-standard achievement and a fresh claim for certification (eg using components 102, 104, etc, within 3638-01) must be made.

Since the key skills standards are intended to reflect candidates' current capabilities (see page 6 of the QCA Key skills qualifications standards and guidance document), any 2000-spec portfolios *re-assessed* and *re-submitted* as 2004-standard achievement must therefore reflect currency at the time claimed. Any specific cases should be discussed with your external verifier in the first instance, although the currency window for NVQs is usually a maximum of three years after the event and we would generally expect a similar timeframe for key skills evidence.

Look out for *Functional skills news* from next month

Following the announcement in last month's *Skills for Life news*, we have brought forward the launch of our dedicated functional skills newsletter. The first edition of *Functional skills news* will now be published in September 2007.

Launching a separate monthly functional skills newsletter will enable us to provide more coherent information about the development of functional skills over the next couple of years, as well as reporting on how our qualification pilot is going. As well as the newsletter, we're also launching a dedicated functional skills website later this month.

Concentrating all information about functional skills in one place will allow *Key skills news* (and for that matter *Skills for Life news*) to focus on providing comprehensive information about the current key skills qualifications which are set to continue until at least 2010.

What's happened with functional skills since last month?

- We've now received QCA accreditation for all nine of our pilot functional skills qualifications (English, Mathematics and ICT at Entry 3, Level 1 and Level 2).
- QCA are working on amplification guidance (similar in some respects to the key skills standards and guidance document) to help clarify the expected standard at each level
- First drafts of our functional skills assessments are almost complete. Pilot centres will receive more detailed information about these (and other essential information) during September.

Don't forget, centres piloting functional skills qualifications with City & Guilds can keep in touch with us by e-mailing functionalskills@cityandguilds.com.

More information about our key skills qualifications can be found on this dedicated City & Guilds website: www.key-skills.org

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For the attention of the key skills co-ordinator



Issue 28 – July 2007

Key skills qualifications

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|------------------------------|---|
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This month's *Key skills news* contains the following:

- Functional skills (3648) – latest news
- Level 4 portfolio panel review
- Paper-based key skills test dates for 2007-08.

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Key skills news...

Functional skills (3648) – latest news

Pilot centres

We understand QCA has now finalised the list of centres taking part in the functional skills qualifications pilot from this September. All of the pilot centres known to be intending to work with City & Guilds will shortly begin receiving regular e-mail updates from us – if you do intend to pilot our functional skills qualifications but are not on our mailing list please contact us straightaway (via functionalskills@cityandguilds.com) so we can make sure you receive all of the information you need.

Please do not be disappointed if QCA has not accepted you onto the pilot for the first year. The pilot will last until 2010 and we understand there will be plenty of opportunities to join in later.

How is assessment shaping up?

QCA is close to finalising the assessment principles that will set the parameters for all awarding bodies' functional skills assessments.

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE



Unlike the current key skills and adult numeracy/literacy qualifications, each functional skills awarding body is able to develop its own assessments (at least during the pilot). There will be no portfolio-based assessment and all tasks will have to be completed under supervised conditions, although the assessments will have to be broader and more activity-based than the current key skills tests.

Like all awarding bodies, City & Guilds has still to finalise precisely how its assessments for the pilot qualifications will operate. The most likely model is that of an externally set series of tasks, completed under supervised conditions and marked internally. We will say more about this as soon as we can, and pilot centres will receive a full briefing during the autumn.

Scope of the pilot

Unlike most awarding bodies, we will be piloting Entry level functional skills qualifications from the outset (initially at Entry 3). Whilst a lot of the political attention has been on Level 2 and the relationship with GCSE, we feel it important not to neglect the needs of other learners – especially adult learners and those on work-based programmes such as apprenticeships.

We can also now confirm that the qualification number for the functional skills qualifications will be **3648** – emphasising that functional skills is likely to be the eventual successor to 3638.

Functional skills news – coming soon

Functional skills will soon have its own dedicated monthly newsletter, alongside *Skills for Life news* and *Key skills news*. The first issue of *Functional skills news* will be published in October.

Level 4 portfolio panel review

The next level 4 key skills portfolio panel review will now take place in November. Please note **all** level 4 key skills portfolios are subject to the panel review and they should not be considered (other than as part of systems monitoring) in the course of normal external verification. For the avoidance of any doubt, these arrangements apply to all key skills candidates irrespective of country.

We will provide more details about arrangements for submitting portfolios to the November panel review nearer the time.

Paper-based key skills test dates for 2007-08

These have now been finalised and are attached. Please note that all of the level 1 and level 2 key skills tests are also available online via the GOLA system where that can be taken on-demand at any time.

Please note all paper-based tests are subject to City & Guilds' exam entry closing dates and **late entry policy**.

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Key skills qualifications

| | |
|------------------------------|---|
| Levels | 1 to 4 |
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This month's news sheet contains the following information:

- Functional skills qualification pilots - update
- Apprenticeships – who decides which key skills are required?
- Essential Skills ICT pilot extended for a further year (Northern Ireland)
- Level 4 portfolios – arrangements for summer 2007 panel review

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A full archive of this newsletter is available from www.key-skills.org.

Functional skills qualification pilots – update

QCA will shortly be finalising the list of centres who will be invited to take part in the functional skills qualification pilots from this September.

Participating centres are generally expected to pilot the qualifications offered by their 'usual' key skills or Skills for Life awarding body. If you are going to be involved in the pilots (eg as a result of being in a Diploma consortium that passed through the Gateway) and intend to pilot City & Guilds' functional skills qualifications, please contact us as a matter of urgency (if you have not already done so) by emailing functionalskills@cityandguilds.com.

Like all functional skills awarding bodies, City & Guilds is still finalising the detail of how these qualifications will be assessed. Unlike the current key skills and adult numeracy/literacy qualifications, awarding bodies will each develop their own assessment models and materials.

Key skills news...

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City & Guilds' assessment model for the first year of the pilot will involve the following:

- task-based activities based around a theme
- internally assessed, with internal and external verification
- available to take on-demand whenever learners are ready
- enable integration of the three functional skill areas and links with vocational learning
- require real application of the functional skills.

The first live assessments are likely to be available from January 2008 although we aim to provide guidance materials when the pilot qualifications open for registrations in September.

All of the City & Guilds centres involved in the pilot will be receiving regular updates and briefings from both ourselves and QCA over the coming months. We will also continue to provide a general update on functional skills in each issue of *Key skills news*.

Apprenticeships – who decides which key skills are required?

It might be helpful for us to outline how apprenticeships (known as 'traineeships' or 'modern apprenticeships' in Northern Ireland and Wales) are structured and what the key skills requirement within apprenticeship programmes normally means in practice.

We would draw your attention to the joint DfES/LSC/QCA publication 'Key Skills Policy and Practice – Your Questions Answered' (available from the 'Download information page on the key.skills.org site). This sets out the minimum key skills requirement for all apprenticeships and the 'Relaxation' arrangements for learners who already have A*-C GCSEs in English, Mathematics and ICT. Although this document has been produced for England, the same principles apply to Modern Apprenticeships and similar programmes in Northern Ireland and Wales.

What is an apprenticeship?

A programme of learning that involves achieving several qualifications, normally an NVQ, Technical Certificate and at least two key skills qualifications. The requirements for each apprenticeship are set out in a framework determined by the relevant Sector Skills Council (SSC).

Apprenticeships are **not** qualifications (although there is currently some discussion about whether they should be). Learners receive a framework completion certificate although this is issued by the SSC and is distinct from the qualifications included in the framework that are issued by awarding bodies like City & Guilds.

Who decides what's in an apprenticeship framework?

This is determined by the relevant SSC although there are national guidelines. For example, the minimum key skills requirement for an Apprenticeship (where the NVQ is at level 2) is normally level 1 Communication and Application of Number. For an Advanced Apprenticeship (involving an NVQ at level 3), Communication and Application of Number are normally needed at level 2.

These do vary however, and it is always best to check with your SSC and local funding body (eg Learning and Skills Council in England). Occasionally key skills qualifications in ICT or the wider key skills are required for framework completion.

How do City & Guilds' 'apprenticeship packages' work?

We operate a number of what we call apprenticeship packages. Again, these are **not** qualifications, although they are designed to allow all of the qualifications required by particular apprenticeship frameworks to be accessed through one registration (avoiding the need to separately register candidates for the NVQ, Technical Certificate and key skills qualifications).

Even where candidates are registered with City & Guilds under an apprenticeship package, all of the qualifications included in the package are subject to their normal rules for certification and are issued as if they had been accessed in the normal way under the usual qualification (scheme) number. Most apprenticeship packages have a City & Guilds qualification number beginning with a '9' – eg 9024 for Retail.

How do we claim apprenticeship completion?

Completion certificates are issued by the relevant SSC – they will need to see evidence that the apprentice has gone through an appropriate programme of learning and achieved all of the required qualifications. Similar evidence will also need to be presented to the funding body (eg LSC in England).

Do all apprentices have to do key skills?

Normally yes, unless the learner has already achieved the key skills required by the framework at the same or a higher level. They can be excused if covered by the Relaxation arrangements (see below).

What is a Relaxation?

The 2001 Relaxation Ruling allows apprentices who already have GCSEs in English, Mathematics or ICT at Grade C or higher to be excused from the framework requirement to complete Communication, Application of Number or ICT, respectively. Only GCSE qualifications may be accepted and they must be less than five years old at the time the learner's apprenticeship programme began.

Where apprentices are entitled to a relaxation from one or more of the required key skills, there is no need to complete these qualifications. If all of the required qualifications are covered by Relaxation GCSEs then there is no need to register the candidate for key skills with City & Guilds.

The apprentice's GCSE certificate(s) should be submitted in lieu of required the key skills when claiming framework completion.

What about key skills proxies – don't we need to claim these?

Proxy exemption is completely separate from the Relaxation arrangements. Proxy qualifications allow candidates working towards a key skills qualification to be exempted from the test (and sometimes for ICT the portfolio as well).

Where level 1 key skills are required for framework completion, apprentices may be able to claim proxy exemption from the key skills tests where they have GCSEs at Grades D-G provided the portfolios are completed and claimed before the GCSEs are three years old.

What if apprentices already have the required key skills before they start?

They will not need to re-achieve their key skills if already achieved at the required level or higher. This includes the original pre-2000 key skills units (City & Guilds' 3615) where tests did not form part of the assessment. However, they will almost certainly need to produce their original certificates to evidence this.

Old key skills attainment cannot be used to 'proxy' for the current key skills qualifications. If the candidate has lost his/her key skills certificate(s), obtaining replacement copies of these is a separate process.

Do key skills have to be completed at the level specified in the framework?

They must be achieved at least at that level; that doesn't mean the specified key skills cannot be completed at a higher level if this is feasible. It is good practice to target the highest-level key skills qualifications the learner is capable of achieving.

If key skills are being completed as part of an apprenticeship, does the portfolio evidence have to be based on that vocational area?

It is probably a good idea if it is, although there is no obligation to do so. Evidence can be based on any activity with a clear purpose.

Essential Skills ICT pilot extended for a further year (Northern Ireland)

The Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) have confirmed that the Essential Skills ICT level 1 and level 2 qualifications pilot (3800-60) will be continuing for a further year. Any additional centres in Northern Ireland wishing to join the pilot from this September should contact DEL.

Level 4 portfolios – arrangements for summer 2007 panel review

The closing date for receiving any level 4 key skills portfolios for the next panel review is **Friday 29 June**. As we have indicated in previous issues of *Key skills news*, **all** completed level 4 key skills portfolios must be submitted to the expert panel for review **before** certification may be claimed.

If you have any level 4 portfolios that are will be ready for the panel to consider by the end of this month, please send them as soon as you can to:

Key Skills Team (Level 4 Panel Review)
City & Guilds
1 Giltspur Street
London
EC1A 9DD.

Please ensure that you enclose all assessor and internal verifier records with the evidence, and please also advise your external verifier that the portfolios are being submitted for review.

The panel will normally look at every portfolio submitted although it may be acceptable to send in a sample where one assessor and/or internal verifier has overseen a significant number of level 4 portfolios (eg more than six). Where this is the case, please contact us as soon as possible (by emailing keyskills@cityandguilds.com) to discuss how best to proceed.

The next panel review meeting is likely to take place at the end of November 2007.

Key skills news continued



More information about our key skills qualifications can be found on this dedicated City & Guilds website: www.key-skills.org

Information about our Skills for Life learner and practitioner qualifications can be found on this dedicated City & Guilds website: www.basic-skills.org.uk

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For the attention of the key skills co-ordinator

Issue 26 – May 2007

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In this month's newsletter:

- Don't miss the boat for the September 2007 functional skills pilots
- NVQ Language Units (3377) – assessment guidance now available
- Restoring lost links

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Don't miss the boat for the September 2007 functional skills pilots

We announced last month that City & Guilds will be offering pilot functional skills qualification from this September. The pilot will cover all three functional skill areas (English, Mathematics and ICT) at Entry level (Entry 1-3), Level 1 and Level 2.

Please note **QCA** are managing the recruitment of pilot centres (there will be roughly 1,000 in total across all awarding bodies). To get involved, you **must contact the** functional skills team at QCA as well as City & Guilds.

The easiest way to contact QCA is to email Sue Georgiouss (georgiouss@qca.org.uk) although when you do please CC your email to skillsforlife@cityandguilds.com. You will need to ensure that your expression of interest indicates:

- whether you are part of a specialised diploma consortium that passed through the Gateway in March 2007 (at least one centre from every consortia in Category 1 or 2 is guaranteed a place on the pilot)
NB: if you are – please indicate which consortium you are part of and the lines of learning you have been approved for
- if you are a GCSE Maths Pathway centre
- if you would be able to pilot the functional skills with adult (post-19) learners

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Key skills news...



- that you are an existing City & Guilds centre and intend to pilot functional skills with us.

Note unlike the key skills qualifications, each awarding body will be **designing its own functional skills assessments** to nationally agreed criteria. City & Guilds intends to offer a system of task templates similar to the ones we recently developed for the functional skills assessment trial. We expect to be able to say a lot more about this approach in the next issue of *Key skills news*.

NVQ Language Units (3377) – assessment guidance now available

The NVQ Language Unit qualifications are designed for people who need to use an additional or foreign language in the course of their work.

The new Standards and Assessment Requirements (SAR) document for the Language Units can be obtained from the 'General learning' section of the main City & Guilds website.

Restoring lost links

You may have noticed that we've recently had a few problems with both the *key-skills.org* and *basic-skills.org.uk* websites. This is as a result of them having to be moved to a new server, although we are aware that some of the links have not been working correctly (eg accessing the Tests Resource Centre and Embedding Skills for Life documents from the 'Download information' page on *key-skills.org*.) There was also a delay in getting the April issue of *Key skills news* uploaded onto the site.

We'd like to express our apologies for any inconvenience this has caused, and please be assured we are working to iron out all of these problems as quickly as possible. We are also drawing up a plan to re-launch these sites in the autumn and to integrate them more closely with the main City & Guilds website.

More information about our key skills qualifications can be found on this dedicated City & Guilds website: **www.key-skills.org**

Information about our Skills for Life learner and practitioner qualifications can be found on this dedicated City & Guilds website: **www.basic-skills.org.uk**

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This month's news sheet contains the following information:

- Functional skills – plans for September's pilot announced
- Functional Skills Support Programme launched
- ICT test data files – please ensure you download *all* files

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A full archive of this newsletter is available on the **key-skills.org** site.

Functional skills – plans for September's pilot announced

QCA have announced further details about the first functional skills qualification pilots due to start this September. We now know the following:

1. Approximately 1000 centres will be invited to take part in the pilot during 2007-08. This will include:
 - representation from (though not necessarily every centre within) each of the specialised diploma consortia that passed through the Gateway in March 2007
 - GCSE Maths Pathway centres
 - at least 200 centres whose primary focus is post-19 learners.

We understand more centres will be invited to join the pilot later on.

2. The pilot will run for three years; the official launch date for all three functional skills qualifications is now 1 September 2010.

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3. The pilot qualifications will be on the National Qualifications Framework and eligible for output-related funding.

We intend to offer functional skills qualifications covering at least levels 1 and 2, and probably Entry level (Entry 1, 2 and 3) as well.

4. All functional skills qualifications will be derived from nationally agreed assessment criteria, although rather than a single 'national test' individual awarding bodies will develop their own task-based assessments.

We anticipate being using a modified version of the task template system we developed for the recent functional skills assessment trial.

5. All functional skills assessments will take place under supervised conditions. This is likely to be similar to the current arrangements for our Entry level Adult Numeracy/Literacy and ESOL Skills for Life assignments, rather than necessarily formal exam conditions.

6. Some further minor changes are being made to the functional skills standards. The final versions that will go forward to pilot are expected to be published by the end of April.

7. QCA will be co-ordinating the recruitment of pilot centres rather than individual awarding bodies (this is to ensure there is no duplication and a fair spread of participants).

Any centres wishing to take part in the pilot **must** log an expression of interest with Sue Georgious at QCA (GeorgiousS@qca.org.uk). When doing so, it would be a great help if you could also advise us at the same time by CCing keyskills@cityandguilds.com.

Functional Skills Support Programme launched

The Quality Improvement Agency (QIA) and Secondary National Strategy (SNS) are setting up a programme to support the implementation of functional skills.

The Functional Skills Support Programme is being managed by LSN, CfBT Education Trust and Learning for Work Ltd, all of whom are involved in the existing **Key Skills Support Programme** and **Skills for Life Improvement Programme**.

The Programme's initial focus will be preparing and supporting centres involved in the functional skills pilot. More information is available from www.qia.org.uk.

ICT test data files – please ensure you download *all* files

As we last indicated in Issue 20 of *Key skills news*, the **complete** set of ICT test data files must be downloaded well in advance of entering candidates for any level or level 4 key skills ICT tests.

The files are available from www.qca.org.uk/603_1824.html; they must all be:

- downloaded and stored locally with their original file names and file formats (eg *.txt* or *.jpg*)
- organised in the folder/file structure shown (eg *Invoice.txt* and *Software.txt* must be contained in a folder called *ITSupply*).

The easiest way to ensure this is the download the ZIP files containing all of the level 3 and level 4 data files. Unzipping these automatically creates the correct structure. The files are refreshed each August/September so it is best to obtain the new files for the following year at that time.

Candidates need to be given read-only access to the **entire** set of data files, both whilst preparing. Since selecting and successfully using these files forms part of the assessment, the complete set of folders/files must be available at all times and **on no account** should candidates:

- know in advance of a test which particular scenario or set of files they will need to use
- be given any guidance during a test on how to import the files into applications.

As we are approaching the busy May and June level 3 and 4 test windows, we would encourage you to double check that you have obtained all of the files for 2006-07, as well as ensuring you have suitable arrangements in place for storing the files locally and making them available to candidates.

More information about our key skills qualifications can be found on this dedicated City & Guilds website: www.key-skills.org

Information about our Skills for Life learner and practitioner qualifications can be found on this dedicated City & Guilds website: www.basic-skills.org.uk

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Key skills qualifications

| | |
|-----------------------|---|
| Levels | 1 to 4 |
| Qualification numbers | 3638 and any qualification packages including access to key skills qualifications |

This month's news sheet contains the following information:

- Discussions for Communication – do these have to be in-person?
- Key skills resource materials – beware of exaggerated claims
- Remember – portfolio component numbers beginning with a '0' can no longer be used
- New answer sheets for paper-based key skills tests
- Functional skills update

Key skills news is published every month and contains all the latest information and updates about the key skills qualifications awarded by City & Guilds.

Key skills news is available via City & Guilds' monthly e-newsletter as well as from the dedicated **key-skills.org** site. You can sign up to receive the e-newsletter at **cityandguilds.com/centres** (you'll need to tick the 'General Learning' category if you want key skills included in the information you receive).

A full archive of this newsletter is available on the **key-skills.org** site.

Discussions for Communication – do these have to be in-person?

We've received a few queries from centres asking whether discussions which take place remotely (eg over the phone) or online (eg via MSN Messenger) can be used to meet the portfolio requirements for key skills Communication.

QCA has considered these requests in relation to Part A of the key skills standards, the Part B criteria and the guidance. They have clarified that such interactions do **not** meet the requirements of the qualification which refer to spoken, face-to-face and not virtual or remote interaction.

In other words, all one-to-one or group discussions for C1.1, all group discussions for C2.1a and C3.1a, plus all talks/presentations for C2.1b and C3.1b, must take place **in-person**.

Key skills news...

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Key skills resource materials – beware of exaggerated claims

We drew attention to the need for caution when purchasing and using key skills support materials in Issue 22 of *Key skills news*. The Key Skills Support Programme (keyskillssupport.net) provides a vast range of free materials, events and support; a number of commercial organisations also provide online and other key skills resources.

City & Guilds does not currently endorse any particular key skills learning or assessment tool, although many of these resources are undoubtedly useful. However, we are concerned that some organisations may be making exaggerated claims about the ability of their products to provide key skills evidence.

We wouldn't wish to dissuade any centre from purchasing a product where they feel it will help with their key skills delivery and achievement, although when evaluating any resource that purports to help with evidence gathering please bear in mind that key skills evidence must in all cases:

- meet the relevant Part B standard in full (as defined by the QCA standards and guidance document)
- have a clear purpose beyond key skills evidence generation
- reflect the amount of candidate autonomy appropriate to the level.

Any evidence generated from an assignment must be assessed against the relevant key skills **standard** rather than the assignment brief. Even a well-designed brief cannot guarantee that all candidates will produce evidence meeting the standard.

Remember - portfolio component numbers beginning with a '0' can no longer be used

Also in Issue 22 of *Key skills news*, we reiterated that portfolio component numbers beginning with a '0' (eg 002, 004, 006, etc) relate to achievement under the 2000 key skills specifications. Since the last certification date for 2000-spec achievement has now passed these components cannot count towards achievement of a key skills qualification.

Please be aware that any '0'-prefixed portfolio component numbers will therefore **no longer trigger certification** when paired with a key skills test pass. This includes any portfolio results submitted via 3638-01 as well as claims made via obsolete qualification numbers such as 3638-90 and 3618. New key skills certificates are now only generated where candidates' portfolio results have been submitted using the 2004-standard component numbers.

A description of the numbering conventions within 3638 can be found on page 66 of the City & Guilds key skills centre guide. For example, the portfolio component numbers beginning with a '1' (eg 102, 104, 106) must be used when submitting results via 3638-01; in Wales the component numbers beginning with a '2' (202, 204, 206, etc) must be used when submitting results via 3638-12 or 3638-13.

Note the key skills tests (001, 003, 005, etc and 973, 974, 975, etc) were not affected by the 2004 standards revision. Test passes achieved prior to 2004 can still be paired with a current 2004-standard portfolio to achieve a key skills qualification. Any tests passes originally achieved via 3618 will be automatically detected by our processing systems.

As we noted in Issue 22, formal re-assessment of **recent** 2000-spec evidence is generally unnecessary as, with the possible exception of ICT at levels 1-3, the 2004 standards contain no additional evidence requirements. Nevertheless, a key skills portfolio is intended to recognise candidates' current capabilities (see page 6 of the QCA Key skills qualifications standards and guidance document) at the time it is claimed.

New answer sheets for paper-based key skills tests

We have recently **changed the design** of our answer sheets for all multiple choice tests and examinations, including those used for the paper-based key skills tests. A sample of the new answer sheet can be accessed from the Tests Resource Centre on **key-skills.org**.

The changes are intended to make it easier for candidates to indicate their chosen answer. There is now an answer circle and separate cancel box for each of the four possible answers (lettered 'a', 'b', 'c' and 'd'). In addition to this there are clear instructions for candidates on each answer sheet.

Functional skills update

As the assessment trials come to an end, our attention is turning to the first qualification pilots due to start in September 2007.

QCA have advised that the initial 2007-08 pilot will involve no more than 800 centres across **all** functional skills awarding bodies. This will need to include at least one centre from each of the specialised diploma partnerships that have passed through the Gateway for 2008, although we also intend to include at least some centres whose primary focus is not a diploma context. We understand a larger number of centres will be able to join the pilot for 2008-09.

We are working with QCA to determine how and when centres will be invited to join the pilot. You will appreciate that we cannot guarantee anyone's involvement at this stage, although if you would like to register your centre's interest, please email **keyskills@cityandguilds.com**.

The outcome of our trial will inform QCA's recommendation to ministers about how the pilot functional skills qualifications should be assessed; on present reckoning we are unlikely to have finalised assessment criteria until at least June!

More information about our key skills qualifications can be found on this dedicated City & Guilds website: **www.key-skills.org**

Information about our Skills for Life learner and practitioner qualifications can be found on this dedicated City & Guilds website: **www.basic-skills.org.uk**

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Key skills qualifications

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| Levels | 1 to 4 |
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This month's news sheet contains the following information:

- Functional skills – the assessment trials and what happens next
- Basic and key skills convergence (Wales only)
- Essential skills assessments – reminder about new arrangements (Northern Ireland only)
- Key skills paper test pass rates for 2005-06 now available
- New edition of Ensuring Quality
- Embedding Skills for Life and key skills Resource document – a reminder

Key skills news is normally published every month and contains all the latest information and updates about the key skills qualifications awarded by City & Guilds.

Key skills news is also available via City & Guilds' monthly e-newsletter as well as from the dedicated **key-skills.org** site. You can sign up to receive the e-newsletter at **cityandguilds.com/centres** (you'll need to tick the 'General Learning' category if you want key skills included in the information you receive).

A full archive of this newsletter is available on the **key-skills.org** site.

Functional skills – the assessment trials and what happens next

The functional skills assessment trials are now well under way and are due to be completed within the next month.

The assessment model we are trialling involves a 'task template' – effectively an assignment structure that can be adapted locally and contextualised to fit in with learners' vocational programmes or other interests. Nine centres are currently trialling the templates with existing key skills and adult numeracy/literacy candidates; it remains to be seen whether QCA will adopt this approach (or something like it) for the qualification pilots due to start in September.

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Key skills news ...



We would like to record our thanks to the nine trial centres for their co-operation and support; given the time pressures of the trial we have been impressed by the speed with which they have got to grips with the template and found suitable learners to try it out with.

What happens after the trial?

We will start to recruit centres for the September 2007 functional skills qualifications pilot as soon as the trials have been completed. Compatibility with specialised diplomas will be a major focus of the pilot, so diploma 'gateway' centres are likely to make up a large proportion of those taking part.

We are also keen to involve as many centres with adult and work-based learners as possible, although there will almost certainly be limits on the numbers that can be admitted for the first pilot.

Basic and key skills convergence (Wales only)

Meanwhile, the Welsh Assembly Government Department for Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills (DELLS) is proceeding with a separate plan to converge key skills and adult numeracy/literacy into a single suite of qualifications.

Draft standards for the new qualifications (as yet untitled) have been produced and they are available to view at www.ksrcymru.org. This site also includes a web-based consultation on the standards which is open until Friday 16 February.

Essential skills assessments – reminder about new arrangements (Northern Ireland only)

Also following on from Issue 12 of *Skills for Life news*, all of the Essential Skills Action-Based Activities and example tasks are now available from the basic-skills.org.uk site. No further hard copies of these documents will be available after 28 February 2007.

Key skills paper test pass rates for 2005-06 now available

Information about the proportion of City & Guilds candidates who were successful in paper-based key skills tests during 2005-06 is now available from the Tests Resource Centre on key-skills.org. Similar data for 2004-05 and for candidates taking the adult numeracy/literacy tests at the same time is also available.

New edition of Ensuring Quality

A brand new edition of Ensuring Quality, City & Guilds' policy and practice guide for externally verified assessments, has just been published and is available from www.cityandguilds.com/centres.

This document is invaluable for co-ordinators of any City & Guilds qualification involving external verification, although some of the issues it covers are of particular importance to the key skills qualifications. The new January 2007 edition supersedes all previous issues of Ensuring Quality.

Embedding Skills for Life and key skills Resource document – a reminder

Finally, could we remind you about our new Embedding Skills for Life Resource document, a guide to integrating key skills and literacy and numeracy learning into candidates' core vocational courses.

The Resource is available via the 'Download information' page on the **key-skills.org** site.

More information about our key skills qualifications can be found on this dedicated City & Guilds website: **www.key-skills.org**

Information about our Skills for Life learner and practitioner qualifications can be found on this dedicated City & Guilds website: **www.basic-skills.org.uk**

Key skills news will revert to its regular monthly format from next month.

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Key skills qualifications

| | |
|------------------------------|---|
| Levels | 1 to 4 |
| Qualification numbers | 3638 and any qualification packages including access to key skills qualifications (also 3800) |

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This double issue news sheet contains the following information:

- Embedding Skills for Life Resource now available
- Recognising key skills test passes achieved via 3618
- Remember: 2000-spec portfolios no longer count towards certification
- Functional skills – what's new?
- Key skills resource materials – what they can/cannot do
- New arrangements for obtaining Essential Skills assessment materials (Northern Ireland only)
- Season's greetings

'Key skills news' is published every month and contains all the latest information and updates about the key skills qualifications awarded by City & Guilds. Previous editions can be viewed at www.key-skills.org.

Embedding Skills for Life Resource document now available

Our brand new guide to embedding Skills for Life into vocational qualifications is now available from the 'Download information' page on the basic-skills.org.uk site.

City & Guilds was one of a number of awarding bodies and sector skills councils to develop models and materials to support the integration of literacy/numeracy and key skills learning within vocational programmes as part of a project funded by the DfES Skills for Life Strategy Unit.

The Embedding Skills for Life Resource document aims to support tutors and centres in embedding key skills and Skills for Life into candidates' core vocational courses. Its main feature is a task analysis tool which draws out and makes explicit the Communication and Application of Number skills needed to complete vocational tasks successfully. It also describes how to 'SMOG' documents for readability.

The Embedding Project piloted task analyses within three vocational areas: Health and Social Care, Construction (Trowel Occupations) and Hospitality. However, the task analysis tool can be applied to any vocational context. As a result of the Project, we have also developed a model for drawing out implied key skills content within Vocationally Related Qualifications and National Occupational Standards. For example,

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Key skills news...



our new Level 2 Certificate in Health and Social Care (3179) includes literacy and numeracy core curriculum references for each assignment task.

The full range of resources produced by all of the Embedding Project participants is available from the Project website – www.totallyskilled.org.uk.

Recognising key skills test passes achieved via 3618

Key skills test passes, as distinct from proxy qualifications substituting for the test, have no 'shelf-life'. Candidates with a test pass are entitled to a key skills qualification at any time in the future if they complete the relevant portfolio.

Our processing systems will recognise any key skills test passes previously achieved with City & Guilds (via 3638 or 3618) and are able to pair these with the appropriate portfolio components when claimed, although when doing so please ensure the candidate's Enrolment Number (ENR) is consistent.

There have been a small number of occasions recently when our systems have not automatically issued certificates where test and portfolio achievement has been split between 3618 and 3638. If you are submitting portfolio results via 3638-01 for any candidates with a **3618 test pass** we strongly urge you to check carefully to ensure all of certificates to which candidates are entitled are present and correct.

If any certificates are missing, please contact our **Customer Relations team** (020 7294 2787) straightaway and ask for the results to be re-issued with a 'hold' note. This enables us to manually re-check the batch against the components submitted and those already credited to the candidates before it leaves the building.

Note that where candidates have key skills test passes achieved through other awarding bodies (or have completed an adult numeracy/literacy test), the same administrative procedure as that for checking and claiming proxies must be followed (see pages 26-27 of the key skills centre guide). The only difference is the lack of a three-year time limit, although even here the test pass must **not** be claimed before the portfolio.

Remember: 2000-spec portfolios no longer count towards certification

Although key skills test passes can be used towards achievement at any time, please be aware that **portfolio** achievement under the **2000** key skills specifications can no longer be used towards certification.

For example, a candidate who achieved a 2000-spec Communication level 1 portfolio in July 2005 (component 002) and the Communication level 1 test in September 2006 is **not** entitled to certification. The only way in which this candidate could be certificated is by re-submitting the candidate's portfolio for achievement under the 2004 standards – ie using component 102 (or 202 in Wales).

All key skills **portfolio** components with an '0' prefix (002, 004, 006, etc) denote 2000-spec achievement. This was the only route available to candidates registered under 3618 or 3638-90.

In practice any evidence covering the 2000 specs will also meet the equivalent 2004 standard (with the possible exception of the email requirement for ICT). Formal reassessment of **recent** 2000-spec evidence should therefore not be necessary, although assessors should note that a key skills portfolio is intended to recognise candidates' current capabilities (see page 6 of the QCA Key skills qualifications standards and guidance document) at the time it is claimed.

Functional skills – what's new?

City & Guilds was successful in its bid to run one of the functional skills assessment trials, and work on this project is now getting underway.

The trials are seeking to investigate ways in which Functional English, Mathematics and ICT can be assessed, as well as to find out how easy it is to translate the draft functional standards into workable assessment criteria.

Our trial involves developing a series of task templates that can be applied to different vocational contexts, whilst at the same time emphasising the underlying process skills candidates need to successfully 'function'. A small number of centres have been selected for the trials, which are due to be completed during January and February. At this stage the trials will involve existing key skills or numeracy/literacy candidates; no functional skills certificates will be awarded ahead of the formal pilots due to start next September.

Key skills resource materials – what they can/cannot do

There is an enormous range of resource materials produced by various organisations that have been designed to support key skills learning and assessment. Much of this material, especially that produced by the DfES-funded Key Skills Support Programme, is free although an increasing number of commercial organisations are also producing online and other support materials.

City & Guilds currently does not formally endorse any particular resource materials, although we would always encourage centres to take advantage of the Key Skills Support Programme's free materials and events (see www.keyskillssupport.net for more information). Some commercially-produced resources may also help with key skills delivery, although we would urge you to check carefully whether these materials actually do what it says on the tin!

Any key skills evidence must meet the relevant Part B standard in full (as defined by the QCA standards and guidance document). Activities must always have a clear purpose and reflect the amount of candidate autonomy appropriate to the level, as well as meeting all of the assessment criteria.

Model assignment briefs can be a good way of helping to ensure candidates produce suitable evidence, although even a well-designed brief cannot guarantee that all of the assessment criteria will be met; nor will it eliminate the need for assessment of each candidate's work.

New arrangements for obtaining Essential Skills assessment materials (Northern Ireland only)

Since the introduction of the Essential Skills qualifications in place of key skills in Northern Ireland, both City & Guilds and CCEA have provided multiple printed copies of the assessment materials. We are now introducing some changes to these arrangements with the aim of making the documents more readily accessible to Essential Skills co-ordinators and tutors as well as eliminating the large number of unused packs that currently go to waste.

All of the example tasks, tutor/learner guides and action-based activities can now be downloaded from the Northern Ireland page on the **basic-skills.org.uk** site. No further orders for hard copies of these documents will be accepted after **28 February 2007**.

The live Entry level tasks and level 1-2 desktop tasks will continue to be supplied in hard copy, although orders may only be placed **after** candidates have been registered and during the following months:

- March
- September
- November.

As at present, City & Guilds centres should order the Essential Skills tasks from our Northern Ireland office (Tel: 028 9032 5689).

Season's greetings

Finally, may we wish you a very happy Christmas and festive period. There's no such thing as a quiet time within the key skills world, although with functional skills and other developments on the horizon it looks like next year is going to be exceptionally busy!

We'd like to take this opportunity to thank you all for your hard work and co-operation over the past year. City & Guilds has been offering key skills (in its various guises) for the best part of 20 years and these qualifications continue to be a huge part of what we do.

Please do enjoy the break (as little or as much as you're able to grab!) and we look forward to continuing to work with you during 2007.

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Key skills qualifications

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This month's news sheet contains the following information:

- Now you can 'ask an expert'!
- Key skills registration routes – now even simpler
- Evidence requirements for proxy exemption or prior test/portfolio achievement
- Online test requirements
- Converting a key skills test pass into a Certificate in Adult Numeracy/Literacy
- ICT level 3-4 test data files

'Key skills news' is published every month and contains all the latest information and updates about the key skills qualifications awarded by City & Guilds. Previous editions can be viewed at www.key-skills.org.

Now you can 'ask an expert'!

Have you ever had a key skills query that you've not been able to find the answer to? The key skills tutor forums on SmartScreen are a good way to raise issues and share good practice. Now they offer SmartScreen subscribers even more value.

We're pleased to announce that Jeff Kinsler, one of our key skills lead verifiers, has become the 'expert' contributor to the Application of Number and Communication forums. Jeff will share his expertise via regular postings of tips and updates and will also respond to requests for information.

Just log in to SmartScreen.co.uk and scroll down to find 'Tutor Forum' on your qualification page. Subscribe at www.smartscreen.co.uk/subscribe.

Key skills registration routes – now even simpler

Now that the formal last certification date for the 2000 key skills specifications has passed, all of the old 3618 (and some 3638) numbers that gave access to the 2000 specs have now been removed from our Directory.

Please note we operate a **single** point for registration for all six key skills qualifications at all four levels. There is no need to specify which key skill(s) or level(s) candidates are working towards when registering, and no need to re-register if these change at any time during the life of the registration.

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Key skills news ...



With the exception of our Apprenticeship Packages, all key skills registrations are made using **3638-01** (3638-12 or -13 in **Wales**). The fees shown below are applicable from 1 October 2006:

3638-01 (England and Northern Ireland)

| Transaction | Amount |
|---|--------|
| Registration (to access any or all of the key skills at any level) | £6.30 |
| Online test (level 1-2) | £6.90 |
| Dated paper test entry (level 1-2) | £7.50 |
| Dated paper test entry (level 3-4) | £8.50 |
| Portfolio – ‘first three’ key skills only | Nil |
| Portfolio – wider key skills only | £5.30 |
| Proxy exemption fee | £3.20 |

3638-12 and 3638-13 (Wales only)

| Transaction | Amount | |
|---|---------|---------|
| | 3638-12 | 3638-13 |
| Registration (to access any or all of the key skills at any level) | £21.30 | £6.30 |
| No tests apply | n/a | n/a |
| Portfolio – ‘first three’ key skills only | Nil | £5.30 |
| Portfolio – wider key skills only | Nil | £5.30 |
| Proxy exemption fee | Nil | £3.20 |

Evidence requirements for proxy exemption or prior test/portfolio achievement

We’ve recently received a number of queries about the documentation required to evidence proxy exemption or prior achievement of a key skills or adult numeracy/literacy test with another awarding body.

Guidance on the process for checking and claiming proxies can be found on **page 26** of our key skills centre guide; proxy exemption or prior achievement must **always** be evidenced by a certificate or results slip from the issuing awarding body.

However, the use of results slips is to some extent complicated by GCE/GCSE results increasingly being transmitted to centres electronically with results statements consequently being printed locally within the centre rather than by the awarding body.

For this reason, a certificate would always be our preference as it leaves least room for uncertainty. The main rationale for allowing results slips is to accommodate A Level students with AS Level passes that have not been ‘cashed in’; in almost all other instances a certificate should be available to check by the time the candidate’s portfolio is complete and the proxy exemption claim is ready to be made.

A results statement is acceptable as a fallback where a certificate cannot be produced, although this must be personal to the candidate (ie not a general list of the centre’s results) with the

contents clearly originating from an awarding body data file. Where the statement has been printed locally, it must be in a consistent format and clearly state the:

- awarding body
- centre name/number
- candidate number.

Anything resembling a 'typed up' list **cannot** be accepted.

The same administrative procedure and evidence requirements apply where the proxy component number is being used to log prior achievement of an adult numeracy/literacy test, or a key skills test achieved with another awarding body. Since these are actual test passes, rather than a substitute assessment, the three-year 'shelf life' does not apply although the proxy component must not be claimed before the portfolio it is being paired with.

Clearly, in the case of a key skills test or portfolio pass, a certificate will not be available, although all key skill awarding bodies issue results slips to confirm test or portfolio passes.

Likewise, no formal time restrictions apply where prior achievement of a key skills portfolio is being paired with a test pass (although all qualifications awarded after 31 August 2006 must contain portfolio evidence meeting the 2004 key skills standards). There are no separate 'proxy' numbers to use when claiming prior achievement of a portfolio via another awarding body, the normal portfolio component number should be used.

Please note any key skills test passes achieved with City & Guilds via 3618 will be automatically credited if the candidate subsequently completes the matching portfolio via 3638. There is no need to re-claim these using the proxy component number although we would advise you to contact our Customer Relations team before submitting any such claims so they can ensure the 3618 result is picked up by our processing systems.

Online test requirements

Please be aware that any key skills tests taken online using the GOLLA system are subject to the same rubric requirements as paper tests. These are set out on page 51 of the key skills centre guide.

In particular, please be aware that:

- dictionaries of any sort are **not** permitted for Communication tests (bilingual dictionaries may be used in Application of Number and ICT tests)
- calculators are **not** permitted for Application of Number level 1-2 tests (though are needed for levels 3 and 4)
- candidates taking any key skills test are allowed paper for notes or rough workings, although this **must** be collected in after the test (for paper tests the question paper and/or answer book can be used for this, although notepaper must be available to any candidates taking online tests).

Converting a key skills test pass into a Certificate in Adult Numeracy/Literacy

Although candidates taking the national tests under a key skills registration will not automatically gain a numeracy or literacy qualification, Application of Number or Communication test passes can be retrospectively converted into Certificates in Adult Numeracy or Adult Literacy. This is intended for circumstances where the candidate is unable to complete his/her portfolio, **not** as a mechanism for dual certification.

The procedure for requesting a conversion is set out on page 61 of our key skills centre guide. There is an administration fee (currently £6.30) and the key skills test must have been passed with City & Guilds.

ICT level 3-4 test data files

Finally, we announced in the last issue of *Key skills news* that QCA had recently refreshed the bank of data files required by candidates taking any of the ICT level 3 or 4 tests.

We received a number of phone calls from centres during the last level 3 tests window asking how to access the data files. Please note these files need to be obtained, stored locally and made accessible to candidates **well in advance** of any tests taking place. Downloading them cannot be left until the day of the test; moreover candidates need access to the **whole** bank of files when taking the test (not just the ones needed for the test being taken) as selecting the appropriate files is one of the skills being assessed.

The files, along with guidance on obtaining and storing them, are located at www.qca.org.uk/603_1824.html.

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