

# All about...

## ISSUE 10 – MARCH 2015

The monthly update from City & Guilds on anything to do with numbers, words or digital/ICT skills across **England, Northern Ireland** and **Wales**.

### In this issue:

- Functional Skills: more information about forthcoming changes
- Making Maths and English Work for All: ETF report backs Functional Skills
- Updated maths and English funding and policy guides now available
- 'Five-year rule' for pre-2012 GCSEs scrapped from Apprenticeships
- New design principles for Essential Skills published by Welsh Government
- International English (IESOL and ISESOL) qualifications: withdrawal dates now confirmed
- ESOL Skills for Life: further clarification about prior achievement

## Functional Skills: more information about forthcoming changes

**Relevant to:** *Functional Skills (3748) (England only)*

**Purpose:** *qualification developments/updates; public policy/strategy/funding*

As we indicated in *Issue 09*, we're planning a number of changes to our Functional Skills assessments at levels 1 and 2 over the next few months. Some of these have been devised as part of our response to the recent Ofqual Thematic Review, whilst others were simply part of our ongoing programme of improvements that we had already been working on.

We'll be releasing more information about each of these changes in **early April**, including:

- a redesign of our externally-marked FS English and FS Mathematics assessments
- new 'in-app' delivery model for FS ICT
- improved forms and guidance for FS English Speaking, Listening and Communication (SLC).

To make sure all of this information reaches the right people, we're asking each City & Guilds Functional Skills centre to provide us with a named lead contact and up to five additional contacts to whom we can send regular updates about changes to Functional Skills over the next few months.

This is distinct from the **preference centre** on our website – where anyone can sign up to receive general email alerts about maths and English (eg links to the latest issue of *All About...*).

If you haven't already provided contact details for this, you can do so using our **Functional Skills Updates Centre**. If you would like more than five contacts within your organisation to be kept updated then simply fill in the form again.

**...Functional Skills, Essential Skills, ESOL, Core Maths, quals, pedagogy, CPD, teaching quals, digital/learning resources, research, policy/funding...**



We're planning to introduce the new 'in-app' FS ICT assessments over the next few weeks, although most of the other changes are due to take effect from **September 2015**.

## Look out for our briefing events...

We're organising a series of briefing networks over the next couple of months where we'll be explaining each of the forthcoming changes to Functional Skills in more detail. Details will appear shortly on our **Events Calendar**.

## ...and more sample assessments

We've recently added a further FS English Writing sample assessment at Level 2, in which one of the tasks involves producing a piece of persuasive writing (a speech). We'll also be adding the following before the end of this month:

### FS English Reading

5 x Level 1 (PDF format)

3 x Level 2 (PDF format)

### FS English Writing

4 x Level 1 (PDF format)

4 x Level 2 (PDF format)

### FS Mathematics

2 x Level 1 (in both PDF and onscreen format)

2 x Level 2 (in both PDF and onscreen format)

Nevertheless, it's important to appreciate that the design of these assessments will be changing significantly from this September. We are developing some new sample assessments that will align with the new-look assessments, although given that these are having to be produced from scratch there will inevitably be fewer sample papers than at present – at least initially.

We anticipate introducing the first batch sample assessments in the new format from **May** onwards.

All of the sample assessments can be accessed via the following links:

- **Onscreen samples – Level 1**
- **Onscreen samples – Level 2**
- **PDF samples (click on the 'Assessment documents' drop-down).**

## ...as well as a new set of handbook documents

We've also updated and redesigned our Functional Skills handbook. It's now split into four volumes:

- Qualification handbook – delivery and administrative guidance for all three functional skills
- Functional Skills English – subject specifications and tutor/assessor guide
- Functional Skills Mathematics – subject specifications and tutor/assessor guide
- Functional Skills ICT – subject specifications and tutor/assessor guide.

As before, the handbook documents are available to download from the 'Centre documents' section of our **Functional Skills qualifications webpage**.

The four new handbook documents incorporate much of the information that could **previously** be found in the separate External Assessment Guide and FAQs. They include recent changes such as the adjustment to the time allowance for FS English Writing at Level 2, although we will update these documents again over the summer to reflect the assessment changes from this September.

## Making Maths and English Work for All: ETF report backs Functional Skills

**Relevant to:** all post-16 maths and English learning (**England** only)

**Purpose:** public policy/strategy/funding; general information

As we indicated in *Issue 08* and *Issue 09*, the Education and Training Foundation (ETF) was asked last autumn to lead a review of non-GCSE maths and English qualifications for post-16 and adult learners. Called 'Making Maths and English Work for All', the review was chaired by Professor Ed Sallis, previously Principal of Jersey's Highlands College.

The review was published on 25 March 2015 and is available from the **ETF website**. Over 1,400 employers, practitioners, learners and providers took part, and the report found strong support for Functional Skills. Key findings include:

- Functional Skills are gaining widespread recognition across small and large employers. Employers who know them like the approach they embody (ie applied skills, flexible assessment and problem solving).
- Functional Skills are benefitting learners because they focus on helping people to acquire skills that are valued by employers. They are needed because otherwise those who have not achieved a 'good' pass at GCSE have no public certification of the skills they have acquired.
- The system of Functional Skills is not broken but could be improved. There are steps that the government and others can take to accelerate the rise in employer recognition and further improve the relevance, rigour and value of these qualifications.

City & Guilds contributed to the review, and we warmly welcome its findings. With the impending election, there clearly won't be any follow up to this report until the new government (whatever its shape...) is in place after 7 May. However, the report will hopefully be early reading for ministers – and provides them with a clear message about the need for more than a one-size-fits-all approach to qualifications in maths and English.

## Updated maths and English funding and policy guides now available

**Relevant to:** any maths/numeracy and English/Welsh/literacy/ESOL qualifications or learning (**England** and **Wales** only)

**Purpose:** public policy/strategy/funding

Last summer we published a guide to the funding/policy landscape for maths and English in England, including information about the new business rules for adult funded qualifications and the condition of funding within 16-19 provision (see *Issue 05*). We also published a separate guide to literacy and numeracy policy in Wales, including information about the Welsh Government's Qualified for Life reforms (see *Issue 06*).

We've updated both of these guides, and they can now be accessed via our **maths and English webpages**. Recent additions include:

## England

- Confirmation that the qualifications within 3847 that were approved for funding in 2014-15 have also now been approved by the Skills Funding Agency for 2015-16.
- Details of the 'top up' adult funding arrangements for the new ESOL Skills for Life qualifications that the Skills Funding Agency announced in October 2014, along with details for the adult funding rate for each qualification within the 4692 suite.
- Further information about the 16-19 condition of funding, following the additional guidance the Education Funding Agency issued in December 2014.

## Wales

- Details of the Welsh Government's ESOL policy.

## 'Five-year rule' for pre-2012 GCSEs scrapped from Apprenticeships

**Relevant to:** all Apprenticeships (**England** only)

**Purpose:** policy/strategy/funding

The Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) has removed the five-year time limit on the use of GCSEs in Mathematics/English/ICT completed before 2012 from the latest version of the **Specification of Apprenticeship Standards for England (SASE)**.

SASE previously only permitted GCSEs at A\* or A grade, or those described as having 'enhanced' functional content' (ie awarded in/since summer 2012), if less than five years old at the time of learners' enrolment on their Apprenticeship. Instead, the revised SASE allows *any* GCSEs at grade E or above (or O levels at grade C or above) in Mathematics, English or ICT to be counted towards framework completion.

The change is due to affect **new** Apprenticeships issued after 6 April 2015. It **won't** apply to any existing frameworks (unless these are re-issued), nor to any apprentices already on-programme.

The removal of the 'five year rule' also potentially allows Key Skills qualifications achieved more than five years before enrolment to be counted, although again this is subject to the relevant framework being reissued. Again, we understand this change **won't** apply to any apprentices already on-programme before 6 April 2015.

## New design principles for Essential Skills published by Welsh Government

**Relevant to:** Essential Skills Wales (3768 and 3868) (**Wales** only)

**Purpose:** qualification developments/updates; public policy/strategy/funding;

A further set of draft design principles for the revised Essential Skills qualifications (3868) are now available from the Qualifications Wales website: **[www.qualificationswales.org/essential-skills-design-principles/](http://www.qualificationswales.org/essential-skills-design-principles/)**.

These documents set out the proposed regulatory parameters for the new Essential Skills qualifications in Communication, Application of Number and Digital Literacy, and are the product of an extended period of collaborative working between awarding organisations, the Welsh Government, Colleges Wales and NTfW.

As we've indicated in previous issues of *All About...*, the revised Essential Skills qualifications will be introduced for first teaching from September 2015, and will involve an end-loaded model of assessment rather than ongoing portfolio building. A number of Essential Skills practitioners are currently working with Colleges Wales to develop and trial an initial set of controlled tasks, after which the final design principles will be published.

A new qualification in Essential Employability Skills is also being developed (effectively to replace the wider Key Skills); we understand the design principles for this will be published after the current trial.

## Old ESW qualifications extended until 31 October 2015

To support a smooth transition to the new Essential Skills qualifications, the Welsh Government has agreed to support a two-month extension to the old Essential Skills Wales (ESW) qualifications (3768). This will allow a short period of parallel running.

The last registration date for the old qualifications will now be **31 October 2015**, with last certification on 31 October 2016. The extension will ostensibly allow learners beginning their programme in September 2015 the opportunity to work towards the old ESW qualifications, as long as they are registered for this suite of qualifications before the end of October.

From 1 November 2015, any new starts will be expected to work towards the new Essential Skills qualifications.

## Look out for more events

We've recently run a couple of initial briefing events about the new Essential Skills qualifications for leaders/managers/facilitators, although we'll be following these up with a further series of launch events after the design principles have been finalised. Look out for further details of these on our Events Calendar ([www.cityandguilds.com/events](http://www.cityandguilds.com/events)).

## International English (IESOL and ISESOL) qualifications: withdrawal dates now confirmed

**Relevant to:** *International ESOL and International Spoken ESOL (8984/8985; also 8575, 8960, 8961, 8962, 8969 and 8981) (all UK, and international);*

**Purpose:** *qualification developments/updates; operational note*

We indicated in *Issue 09* that we had been reviewing the future of our International English qualifications, following the announcement last December that we would not be re-applying to have International ESOL (IESOL) and International Spoken ESOL (ISESOL) included on the Home Office list of Secure English Language Tests (SELT).

We have concluded these qualifications do not align closely enough with City & Guilds' broader strategy and purpose, and have decided to withdraw these qualifications from **31 August 2015**.

Our **International English qualifications microsite** has more detailed information about the last assessment/certification dates for each of these qualifications. Please also note that, because of these qualifications ceasing to be on the Home Office SELT list, any IESOL/ISESOL qualifications completed after 5 April 2015 **cannot** be used to support UK visa applications.

## Can UK-based IESOL/ISESOL centres switch to delivering the new ESOL Skills for Life (4692) qualifications?

Yes – subject to meeting our normal conditions of approval for these qualifications (the **4692 qualifications handbook** describes the additional conditions that apply specifically to these qualifications above and beyond City & Guilds' standard requirements).

IESOL/ISESOL were primarily intended for international use rather than necessarily for centres or learners within the UK (historically, they were based on the old Pitman ESOL examinations), and they have not been eligible for public funding in England or Wales since the introduction of ESOL Skills for Life in 2004. Where they have been used, this has typically been either as part of an internationally-focused (eg traditional 'EFL') programme or to support visa extension applications.

ESOL Skills for Life, on the other hand, is intended to support speakers of other languages based within the UK to develop their English language skills for work, further learning or everyday life. It's offered in a wide range of settings and, unlike IESOL/ISESOL, can be delivered as part of a publicly funded programme. As an Ofqual-regulated ESOL qualification, ESOL Skills for Life qualifications at/above Entry 3 can be used towards the language requirement for permanent Settlement or Naturalisation (see *Issue 09* for a more detailed explanation).

## ESOL Skills for Life: further clarification about prior achievement

**Relevant to:** *ESOL Skills for Life (4692) (England, Northern Ireland and Wales)*

**Purpose:** *qualification developments/updates; operational note*

We indicated in *Issue 09* that it's now possible to bring forward up to two component achievements from previous ESOL Skills for Life qualifications and count these towards the **Certificate**-sized qualifications within 4692. Details of the process for checking and claiming prior achievements can now be found in the **4692 qualifications handbook**.

We've since been asked whether it is possible to bring forward achievements of Functional Skills English Reading at levels 1 or 2, given that the 'interim' Level 1-2 Reading assessments we introduced for the old (3692) ESOL Skills for Life qualifications in September 2013 were based on the same specification as our FS English Reading assessments.

Achievement of City & Guilds' FS English Reading assessments can certainly be counted toward the **old** ESOL Skills for Life qualifications at levels 1 and 2 (3692-11 and 3692-12). We reiterated in *Issue 08* that this was still the case, and any candidates registered for these qualifications before they closed have until 31 December 2015 to achieve certification. Please note **only** FS English Reading assessments completed with **City & Guilds** (either via 3748-01, or during one of the fixed-date opportunities when we made these assessments available within 3692-11 and 3692-12 last year) may be accepted for this purpose.

It was never our intention that FS English Reading should be allowed to 'proxy' for achievement of the *new* Level 1-2 Reading tests within 4692. Unlike their predecessors within 3692, the new tests were designed specifically for ESOL learners and are available on-demand (with both onscreen and paper-based delivery options).

Nevertheless, given that Level 1-2 Reading components from 3692 can be counted towards the full-mode Certificates within 4692, we're happy to clarify that this includes achievements involving the interim assessment arrangements introduced after September 2013. If this involved accessing the



Reading assessment via 3748-01, then it should nevertheless be clear that the learner was working towards an ESOL qualification aim.

This would normally be demonstrable through the learner having also been registered as a candidate for 3692-11 or 3692-12, with their Reading achievement recorded using the relevant 'proxy' module (eg 3692-501 or 3692-501). However, if any individual learners were not registered for 3692 before it closed, then it **must** be evident in at some other way (eg via their ILR) that they were enrolled for the old Level 1 or 2 ESOL Skills for Life qualification.

## More sample assessments (and FAQs) available

We're in the process of adding a second set of sample assignments (and Reading tests) at each level, as well as a set of FAQs covering some common queries about the operation of the assessments.

Please also note that we have recently made a few minor amendments to some of the live assignments (mostly in response to feedback – so thank you for this!). That process is due to be completed by end of April, although in the meantime there may be few instances where version numbering for the candidate's paper and assessment pack will not always be consistent. Rest assured, however, that the document available on our website at any time will always be the latest version!

## Tell us what you think

*All About...* is published monthly and brings together all of the key developments from City & Guilds relating to maths/numeracy/number, English/literacy/language/communication and ICT/digital skills learning and qualifications. You'll find information about **all** of the 'maths and English' qualifications that we offer across **England, Northern Ireland and Wales** – including **Functional Skills** and **Essential Skills**.

*All About...* also includes updates on teaching and learning resources, as well as relevant public policy or other information we think you might be interested in. We've tried to categorise each article by indicating any specific City & Guilds qualification(s) it relates to, and/or if it applies only to England, Northern Ireland or Wales.

Each edition is numbered, so we can refer back to previous issues or tell you when information has been superseded.

If there's anything else you'd particularly like us to cover or explain more fully in future issues of *All About...*, please feel free to drop us a line to [mathsandenglish@cityandguilds.com](mailto:mathsandenglish@cityandguilds.com) or tweet using the hashtag **#CGMathsEnglish**.

For more information about City & Guilds' entire range of 'maths and English' products and services, please visit [www.cityandguilds.com/mathsandenglish](http://www.cityandguilds.com/mathsandenglish).

Every effort has been made to ensure that the information contained in this publication is true and correct at time of going to press. However, City & Guilds products and services are subject to continuous development and improvement and the right is reserved to change Products and services from time to time. City & Guilds cannot accept liability for loss or damage arising from the use of information in this publication. City & Guilds is a registered charity established to promote education and training.