

All about...

ISSUE 09 – JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2015

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

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Ofqual's Functional Skills Thematic Review: what does the report say, and how will our assessments change?

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

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

Ofqual has now published the findings from its recent Thematic Review of Functional Skills. The review looked at all awarding organisations' Functional Skills qualifications at Level 2 (see *Issue 03* for further background) and the report contains a number of recommendations to make these qualifications more robust, reliable and consistent.

The report contains many positive comments about Functional Skills, noting that over a million Functional Skills qualifications are now awarded each year. The Call for Evidence during this review also indicated strong support for Functional Skills amongst providers and employers, with the vast majority of respondents saying these qualifications meet their intended purpose, and that they assess the real skills that employers need in the workplace.

City & Guilds has played an active part in the recent debate surrounding maths and English qualifications in England, particularly the position of Functional Skills in relation to GCSE; we have

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



long supported the need for a suite of qualifications with a real-life focus on application and skills practice that has a clear value and purpose in work, life and learning. Following recent comments from Government about Functional Skills having a secure future (see *Issue 08*) and the 'Making maths and English work for all' review (see below), it is pleasing to see the Regulator also valuing and taking a keen interest in these qualifications.

We therefore warmly welcome the review, the report and its recommendations, and are keen to work with our centres to ensure any actions are implemented swiftly, seamlessly, and with the best support we can offer.

What will need to change?

Ofqual identified four areas requiring improvement across **all** Functional Skills awarding organisations:

- the quality of assessment materials
- reducing the risk of malpractice
- strengthening standard setting procedures
- evaluating better how far these qualifications are meeting user needs.

We've already begun work on those recommendations that apply specifically to our Functional Skills qualifications. Some of these relate to our internal processes so will not be outwardly visible, but others will affect the design of our assessments at levels 1 and 2 – and in **some** cases these might lead to the assessments providing additional challenge. However, as Ofqual indicates in its report, all awarding organisations will be making changes to their assessments over the next few months, and the overall result should be that the demand of assessments across all awarding organisations is more comparable.

How will be keeping centres informed and involved?

We've recently written to the Head of Centre at all of the centres currently approved to offer Functional Skills with City & Guilds, providing our initial reaction to the review and asking them in each case to provide a **named lead contact** (and up to five other key contacts) with whom we can liaise regularly and share full details of what the changes to our assessments over the next few months will involve. We're particularly anxious to ensure that each of the changes we make are explained carefully and fully understood. We will therefore expect these lead/key contacts to cascade this information as required to all who need to know within their centre.

If you haven't already provided details of your centre's lead/key contact(s), you can do so at www.cityandguilds.com/FS-updates. We've also provided a more detailed summary of the review's findings on our **Maths and English webpages**.

We're already making some changes...

We indicated in *Issue 08* that we're already working a number of improvements to our Functional Skills assessments at levels 1 and 2 over the next few months, including the new 'in-app' delivery model for FS ICT. The further revisions required as a result of the Thematic Review are effectively a continuation of this work, and of our ongoing programme of investment in these qualifications since the initial national pilots back in 2007.

Whilst we will be sharing further detail about these changes with lead/key contacts as soon as we can, there will also be an overview of what they're likely to mean for each functional skill/level in next month's issue.

Functional Skills pass rate data now available for each of the last four years

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

Purpose: operational note

We've recently updated the external assessment pass rate information on our **Functional Skills qualification webpage** to include data for 2012-13 and 2013-14. The report now shows the pattern of pass rates over each of the last four years since the current qualifications were launched, broken down to show:

- onscreen vs paper delivery
- age group
- centre type
- time of year.

As we indicate in the report, both the volume and profile of Functional Skills learners has changed considerably since 2010, when the vast majority of apprentices in England were still working towards Key Skills qualifications and the Wolf Review had yet to steer the Government towards favouring GCSE.

The general trend is towards improving results, and even when the proportion of candidates achieving a pass grade has declined (eg for FS Mathematics in 2012-13 and 2013-14), this is against a background of a much greater number of learners accessing these qualifications. There are also some notable patterns, repeated to varying degrees across all three functional skills:

- adults generally perform better than pre-19 learners
- training providers tend to out-perform colleges
- candidates attempting these assessments during the autumn on the whole do better than those sitting in April-June.

ESOL Skills for Life: counting prior achievement towards the new Certificate-sized qualifications

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

Purpose: qualification developments/updates; operational note

As we indicated in *Issue 08*, we are introducing a process that will allow prior achievements from each of the following to count towards the new 'full mode' **Certificate**-sized ESOL Skills for Life qualifications:

- individual components of the previous City & Guilds ESOL Skills for Life qualification (3692)
- individual components from other awarding organisations' previous (NQF) ESOL Skills for Life qualifications
- individual units from other awarding organisations' new (QCF) ESOL Skills for Life qualifications.

At least one of the three modes (ie at least one of Reading, Writing or Speaking and Listening) must be achieved by completing a current City & Guilds ESOL Skills for Life (4692) unit assessment; prior achievement may be recognised **in lieu of** up to two of the remaining units. Where prior achievements are used towards certification, this strictly speaking does not constitute achievement of the current City & Guilds ESOL Skills for Life unit, nor should it infer that unit's associated credit value. Where public funding is being sought, particular care should be taken to ensure double funding is not claimed in respect of learners' previous achievements.

We've now set up a series of 'proxy' modules that will allow prior achievements to be recognised. These are only available within the 'top up' route for the Certificate-sized qualifications (4692-92).

Centres are required to check candidates' prior achievements **before claiming** as part of their internal quality assurance process, and in each case these must be evidenced by a certificate or results statement from the issuing awarding organisation. There will be a small administrative charge (£5.00) for each claim, to reflect the additional external quality assurance costs involved in monitoring these arrangements.

The qualification handbook is also being revised to include full details of the procedure for checking and claiming prior achievements, although in the meantime these can be found on the 4692-92 Walled Garden Catalogue page.

4692-02 vs 4692-92 – what's the difference?

Both registration routes contain the **Certificate**-sized qualifications at **all five levels**, although they are each priced differently:

- **4692-02** has an upfront registration fee, although there are then no further fees to pay for unit results entries or for any **first** attempts at the Level 1-2 Reading tests (resits are chargeable). This route is intended for learners on a long-term programme who are committed to completing one or more of the three-mode Certificate-sized qualifications.

Although the registration fee is payable upfront, it potentially allows candidates to work through and achieve all five levels (each registration is valid for three years) without further charge – other than resits for the Reading tests, if required.

- **4692-92** has no upfront registration fee, although there are fees for unit results entry, as well for each Level 1-2 Reading test. The fees charged in each case match those for the single-unit Award-sized qualifications within **4692-01**.

There are two main sets of circumstances where 4692-92 might be used:

1. Where learners have already achieved (or are about to achieve) the three Award-sized qualifications, and want to combine these into a Certificate-sized qualification.

Because the fee structure mirrors that for 4692-01, any fees already paid for entering results or accessing Level 1-2 Reading tests via 4692-01 won't be charged again if the candidate is re-registered for 4692-92. In this situation, all that would be required to trigger certification is the relevant certification module – for which there is no charge.

2. For learners who still ultimately intend to achieve a Certificate but where there is less certainty that they will manage to complete all three units, and especially where it is unlikely that they will subsequently work towards a second Certificate-sized qualification at the next level. This route avoids the upfront fee, and there is nothing to pay unless/until candidates complete (or enter for a Level 1-2 Reading test).

This route also makes it easier for candidates with one or two units towards the Certificate to 'cash' these in as Awards (by re-registering for 4692-01). Again, any fees for units already completed via 4692-92 won't be charged again if the candidate is subsequently re-registered for 4692-01.

Please also note that the new 'proxy' modules for recognising prior achievements from other ESOL Skills for Life qualifications are **only** available within **4692-92**. This is because

these can only be counted towards the Certificate-sized qualifications, and in each case will require candidates to complete at least one of the three required units from 4692.

International ESOL/SESOL: inclusion on Home Office SELT list ends in April 2015

Relevant to: *International ESOL and International Spoken ESOL (8984/8985) (all UK, and international);*

also *ESOL Skills for Life (3692/4692) (England, Northern Ireland and Wales)*

Purpose: *qualification developments/updates; operational note*

We wrote to all International ESOL (IESOL) and International Spoken ESOL (ISESOL) centres in December to advise that City & Guilds will **not** be re-applying to have these qualifications included on the Home Office list of Secure English Language Tests (SELT).

This means that these qualifications will not appear on the revised SELT list when it is published after the next UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) re-tendering process. The Home Office UKVI team are aware that we are not intending to re-apply, and we have agreed the following transitional arrangements with them:

- City & Guilds IESOL and ISESOL issued for examinations taken on or before **5 April 2015** may be used to support UK visa applications, provided the applications are submitted on or before **5 November 2015**.
- From **6 November 2015**, our IESOL/ ISESOL certificates will not be accepted for UK visa applications.

We are separately considering the future of these qualifications, although in the meantime their next regulatory review (last registration) and last certification dates remain 31 July 2015 and 31 December 2015, respectively.

Does this affect ESOL Skills for Life in any way?

No – our ESOL Skills for Life qualifications (3692 or 4692) have **never** been included on the SELT list, partly because in order to do so they would need to be available internationally (most UK visa applications are made from outside the UK); more importantly it would also involve them having to meet a number of other very prescriptive conditions that would change the whole character of these qualifications.

It is important not to confuse the language requirements for visas with those for permanent Settlement/Naturalisation (Indefinite Leave to Remain or Citizenship). The latter, sometimes known as the Knowledge of Language and Life or 'KoLL' requirement, requires applicants to pass the Home Office's own Life in the UK Test **as well as** demonstrating knowledge of spoken English at the equivalent of CEFR B1 or higher.

Although SELT-listed tests and qualifications at/above B1 are now accepted for Settlement (eg so as to allow qualifications gained before coming to the UK), the current rules also allow **any** of:

- an Ofqual-regulated ESOL qualification at Entry 3 or higher, completed in England, Northern Ireland or Wales.
- an SQA ESOL qualification at SCQF Level 4 or higher, completed in Scotland
- a degree taught or researched in English (with certain conditions – see www.gov.uk/english-language for details).

All awarding organisations' ESOL Skills for Life qualifications (both old and new) are Ofqual-regulated, and are therefore **covered by the first bullet point** as long as they are completed in England, Northern Ireland or Wales, and achieved at Entry 3, Level 1 or Level 2.

Will the Home Office *definitely* accept the new QCF qualifications (eg 4692)?

Whilst the current KoLL requirements pre-date the new QCF-based ESOL Skills for Life qualifications, the new Certificate-sized qualifications, and Awards in Speaking and Listening, are clearly acceptable since they are like-for-like replacements.

Strictly speaking, the new Awards in Reading and Writing should also be accepted – although we are aware that the Home Office’s original intention when drawing up these regulations was to ensure all applicants’ spoken English had been tested. In the absence of a clear steer (either way) from the Home Office, we would therefore advise against relying **solely** on one of these qualifications if intending to apply for Settlement/Naturalisation.

Making maths and English work for all – make sure you join the conversation

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

Purpose: public policy/strategy/funding; general information

As we indicated in *Issue 08*, The Education and Training Foundation (ETF) has been asked to lead the Government’s review of non-GCSE maths and English qualifications for post-16 and adult learners.

Professor Ed Sallis, previously Principal of Jersey’s Highlands College, has been asked the chair the review’s steering group, and an online portal has been set up to manage the public consultation: **www.pyetait.com/jointheconvo**. As well as an online questionnaire, there are consultation events and webinars over the next couple of weeks.

The timescales for the review are extremely tight: the formal consultation closes on **Tuesday 24 February** and the report is due to be delivered to ministers in March. Nevertheless, we **cannot overstate the importance of engaging with this review** – given that its recommendations are likely to have significant implications for Functional Skills as well as for other non-GCSE qualifications and learning support.

City & Guilds will, of course, be responding to the consultation. We’re also meeting directly with ETF and their delivery partner Pye Tait Consulting.

Look out for our Essential Skills Wales briefing networks

Relevant to: Essential Skills Wales (3768), wider Key Skills (3638-21) and any other relevant learning (**Wales** only)

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

We’re continuing to work with the Welsh Government and Colleges Wales (Colegau Cymru) on the revised Essential Skills qualifications that will replace the current Essential Skills Wales (ESW) suite from this autumn.

A number of Essential Skills practitioners are currently working with Colegau Cymru to develop and trial an initial set of controlled tasks that will be used to inform the final design of the new qualifications. This project is due to be complete by the end of March – after which the four awarding organisations intending to offer the new Essential Skills qualifications (City & Guilds, Agored, Pearson and WJEC) will work together to finalise the first batch of live assessments.

Meanwhile, the new Essential Skills qualifications now have a City & Guilds number – **3868**, and we’ll shortly be setting up a qualification webpage that will contain more detailed information about

them. The main difference will be a move to end-assessment rather than portfolios, although there will also be completely new qualifications in Digital Literacy and Employability to replace ICT and the wider Key Skills.

To help explain these changes more fully, we're holding a couple of network events for current City & Guilds Essential Skills Wales (3768) centres during March. The main purpose of these events will be to outline how each of the new Essential Skills qualifications will be assessed, as well as to explore what impact these changes likely to have on teaching and learning practice.

The two networks will be on **Friday 20 March** and **Friday 27 March**, both at the City & Guilds Wales office in Llanishen, Cardiff. Details will be available on our **Events Calendar** shortly.

There's further background information on these changes, and the wider **Qualified for Life** reforms, in our **Guide to numeracy and literacy policy in Wales**.

Digital Literacy Practitioners' qualification – coming soon

To accompany the new Essential Digital Literacy Skills qualification, we're now able to confirm that City & Guilds will be offering a Level 3 qualification for Digital Literacy Practitioners. The units for this new qualification have been developed in conjunction with Colegau Cymru, Welsh Government, Agored and a number of experienced Essential Skills practitioners.

The new qualification will initially be available to participants in the Welsh Government's Digital Literacy Train the Trainer programme, ahead of a more general rollout from this autumn.

The Digital Literacy Practitioner qualification will complement the existing Delivering Essential Skills qualifications (8375) that focus on Literacy, Numeracy and ESOL. Following a recent consultation, the existing 8375 qualifications are being extended for a further two years.

QCF maths and English qualifications: adult funding for 2015-16

Relevant to: *Principles of Using English/Mathematics and English/Mathematics Skills (3844 and 3847) (England only)*

Purpose: *public policy/strategy/funding*

We indicated in *Issue 08* that we have had submitted 2015-16 funding applications to the Skills Funding Agency for each of our QCF maths and English qualifications at Entry level and Level 1 that are currently eligible for adult skills funding. In each case we were required to provide evidence of continuing demand.

The Skills Funding Agency published the first edition of its **2015-16 funding rates catalogue** on 5 February 2015. We're please to confirm that **all** of the qualifications within the English/Mathematics Skills suite (**3847**) that are currently approved for funding will remain so for 2015-16.

We are still **waiting for confirmation** that the Principles of Using English/Mathematics qualifications (3844) have been re-approved for 2015-16. Applications have been submitted for each of these, and we expect to hear back from the Skills Funding Agency shortly.

Further information about the business rules that determine funding eligibility for QCF maths and English qualifications can be found in our **Guide to maths and English policy/funding in England**.

TSSP produce e-guide to maths and English in Traineeships

Relevant to: all maths and English provision within Traineeships (**England** only)

Purpose: teaching and learning support updates; general information

The Traineeship Staff Support Programme (TSSP) has produced an e-guide to support and help plan maths and English provision within Traineeship programmes. It's the first in a series of TSSP resources that have been commissioned and funded by the Education and Training Foundation (ETF).

The e-guide is particularly intended to support:

- tutors and assessors delivering maths and English as part of a Traineeship programme, (although elements of the guide could also be used in 16-19 study programmes and Apprenticeships)
- leaders and managers who have overall responsibility for trainees' development, supporting their further progress with maths and English development, training and employment

Some parts of the guide will also be helpful to tutors, assessors and other provider staff who do not directly teach maths and English, but who are involved in trainees' skills development and their progression from a Traineeship.

As well as being produced in an interactive format that allows readers to quickly access information that is most relevant to them, the guide has also been produced in a format suitable for use with screen readers so that it can be used by those with a visual impairment.

Both versions of the guide are available from www.traineeship-staff-support.co.uk/resources.

ESOL Nexus project: new website for accessing FREE resources

Relevant to: all ESOL learning (England, Northern Ireland and Wales)

Purpose: teaching and learning support updates; general information

Finally, the British Council ESOL Nexus project has been running for a number of years, and provides a range of online teaching resources and activities to support language learning.

The project website has just been revamped, and is now easier to navigate as well as being easier to access on tablets or smartphones. As before, it can be accessed via <http://esol.britishcouncil.org/>.

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 or tweet using the hashtag **#CGMathsEnglish**.

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