

ISSUE 11 – APRIL-MAY 2015

The monthly 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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Recent Home Office English language changes: what do/don't they mean?

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

Purpose: *public policy/strategy/funding; operational note*

We indicated in *Issue 09* that the Home Office had recently reviewed the range of Secure English Language Tests (SELT) it will accept as proof of language for those applying for Limited Leave (ie a visa to stay in the UK for a specified period).

The **revised SELT list** came into force on 6 April 2015; there are now only **two** providers (Trinity College London and the IELTS SELT Consortium), with the tests only available within the UK at **20** approved testing centres (NB: most visa applications are made from *outside* of the UK, and there are over 200 approved testing centres throughout the rest of the world).

There are transitional arrangements for those who sat any of the tests included on the **previous** SELT list (eg our International ESOL/SESOL qualifications). These arrangements require the test to have been taken before 6 April 2015, and these tests may only be used to support applications to UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) until 5 November 2015.

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Functional Skills, Essential Skills, ESOL, Core Maths, Framework qualifications, pedagogy, digital/learning resources, research, policy/funding...



Changes to requirements for Settlement and Naturalisation

Separate from the recent changes to arrangements for visa applicants, the Home Office has also announced a change to the **Knowledge of Language and Life (KoLL)** requirements for permanent Settlement (Indefinite Leave to Remain) and Naturalisation (Citizenship).

The *language* part of KoLL can **currently** be met with **any** of any of the following:

- a SELT-listed test in speaking at listening at B1 or higher of the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR)
- an Ofqual-regulated ESOL qualification at Entry 3 or higher (as long as this included assessment of Speaking and Listening and was completed in England, Northern Ireland or Wales)
- an SQA National ESOL qualification at SCQF Level 4 or higher (if completed in Scotland)
- a degree taught in English.

The new arrangements from November 2015 will:

- only allow English language tests included on the **new SELT list**, taken at one of the 20 approved SELT test centres
- **not** allow any other type of ESOL qualification to be used
- continue to require at least

When's this change due to come in?

The Home Office has said this change will come into force from **November 2015**, although we understand the exact date is subject to Parliamentary approval.

Can ESOL Skills for Life qualifications still be used to support Citizenship/ILR applications until November?

Yes – unfortunately some of the initial communication from the Home Office was ambiguous about this, especially about whether the qualification had to have been achieved before 6 April 2015 (when the new SELT list was introduced). The Home Office has since clarified that Ofqual-regulated ESOL qualifications **can** continue to be used to support Settlement/Naturalisation until November – regardless of when completed.

Other tests on the old SELT list (eg our International ESOL/SESOL) will also still be accepted until November, although any that are not Ofqual-regulated would need to have been completed before 6 April 2015.

Was there any consultation (or an equality impact assessment) before these changes were announced?

There does not seem to have been a public consultation, and there is considerable consternation about this within the ESOL community (**see statement from NATECLA**).

The Home Office has justified this change by arguing it will ensure the immigration system has consistent security features to limit abuse, with those seeking permanent residence required to meet the same standards as temporary migrants. By announcing this change now, they also say they are giving learners currently studying for an ESOL qualification time to complete, as well as ensuring those intending to start courses later this year are aware of the changing situation.

Nevertheless, there are a number of important differences between the KoLL requirements for permanent Settlement/Naturalisation and the language requirements for Limited Leave; something

the Home Office acknowledged when it broadened the range of accepted language tests/qualifications when the KoLL requirements were last amended in 2013.

For example, applicants for permanent Settlement/Naturalisation:

- are mostly already resident in the UK (and in many cases will have been for some time)
- also have to pass the Life in the UK test, as well as demonstrating their knowledge of spoken English.

Restricting applicants to one of the 20 SELT testing centres will also clearly have significant implications (by comparison, there are currently 60 Life in the UK test centres).

It's important to emphasise that City & Guilds has had no involvement in this decision, nor we were given any prior notice before it was announced to providers at the end of March.

Principles of maths and English qualifications: now approved for adult funding in 2015-16

Relevant to: *Principles of Mathematics/English (3844) (England only)*

Purpose: *public policy/strategy/funding*

We advised in *Issue 09* that each of the eligible qualifications within the Mathematics/English Skills suite (3847) had been approved by the Skills Funding Agency for 2015-16.

We can now confirm that the following qualifications within the **Principles of Using Mathematics/English suite (3844)** have also now received approval for adult skills funding:

Qualification	City & Guilds	
601/1288/8	3844-20	Entry Level Certificate in the Principles of Using Mathematical
600/7655/0	3844-21	Level 1 Certificate in the Principles of Using Mathematical
601/1420/4	3844-10	Entry Level Award in the Principles of Using Written and
600/7917/4	3844-11	Level 1 Award in the Principles of Using Written and Spoken

This now means that **all** of our eligible Framework qualifications in maths and English (ie those that satisfy the Skills Funding Agency's business rules) have now been approved for funding in 2015-16.

Further information about the funding arrangements for these qualifications, and for maths and English more generally, can be found in our **funding/policy guide for England**.

Improvements to Functional Skills: further details revealed

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

Purpose: *qualification developments/updates*

We've recently published further information about each of our planned changes and improvements to our Functional Skills offer. For details, please visit our **Improving Functional Skills** webpages. Each of the major changes, now in place or coming soon, are outlined below.

New in-application assessment for Functional Skills ICT at levels 1 and 2

Our brand new method of delivering onscreen assessments for Functional Skills ICT is now live.

In-application (in-app) assessment still uses the e-volve system to deliver assessment tasks and source data securely to learners, although rather than being based on simulated software applications built inside the e-volve system it allows them to use familiar MS Office applications that have been installed locally.

Like all assessments delivered via e-volve, the new in-app Functional Skills ICT assessments remain available on-demand with scheduling possible as little as 30 minutes before an assessment can be taken. It also remains possible to administer these assessments either online or offline.

How do I schedule an in-app assessment?

The ordering process is exactly the same as for any other e-volve test, although a new set of product codes has been added to the 3748-03 Catalogue page on the Walled Garden to identify the in-app assessments. These are:

- 3748-924 – for Level 1
- 3748-925 – for Level 2.

How long will the old 'simulation' assessments remain available?

These will remain available alongside the new in-app assessments until 31 July 2015, after which they will be switched off.

And what about the paper-delivered assessments?

We have no plans to withdraw the Named on Demand paper-based FS ICT assessments, although if you are currently using this model you might want to take a fresh look at onscreen delivery now that in-app is available:

- data files accessed directly by candidates through the e-volve system – so no need to download them in advance
- candidates receive all of their instructions through the e-volve system – so no papers to give out or email accounts to set up
- all of the search tasks are regulated through the e-volve system – so no need to enable/disable internet access during each sitting
- the substantive tasks are all completed using standard, locally installed, MS Office – so no need for candidates to re-familiarise with simulated applications
- candidates' completed work is uploaded through the e-volve system – so no need to worry about printing.

Is there any further guidance about in-app available?

Yes – please visit our **in-app webpage** for further guidance, checklists and troubleshooting information. Sample FS ICT in-app assessments are also available from the **Level 1** and **Level 2** drop-downs on the 3748 qualification information webpage.

Changes to externally-marked Functional Skills English and Mathematics assessments at levels 1 and 2

Following feedback from the Ofqual Functional Skills thematic review (see *Issue 09*), we're making a number of design changes to our externally-marked Functional Skills assessments in English and mathematics at levels 1 and 2.

Broadly speaking, these changes will make the assessment tasks more varied and look more true to life. Nevertheless, it's important to note **the qualifications' standards are not changing** – so this shouldn't require any fundamental changes to teaching and learning.

The revised assessments will be introduced in September 2015 and we're developing a comprehensive support programme to help you understand the changes. This includes releasing an initial set of sample assessments in the new formats before the end of this month. We're also running a series of support events. Unfortunately the first wave of these are now fully booked, although we will release some further dates soon so please keep checking our **Events Calendar**.

Improved forms and guidance for Functional Skills English Speaking, Listening and Communication (SLC)

We're also redesigning the forms and improving the guidance notes for our Functional Skills English Speaking, Listening and Communication (SLC) assessments. Again, these will be introduced in September 2015.

More samples (of the *current* assessments) now available

In the meantime, we've just added a few more sample assessments in the **current** format to our website. In total we now have:

	Number of paper (PDF) *	Number of 'onscreen' †
FS ICT Level 1 (3748-x24)	5	1 (in-app)
FS ICT Level 2 (3748-x25)	5‡	1 (in-app)

As we indicated in *Issue 10*, there will be fewer samples available (at least initially) when the redesigned assessments are introduced this autumn. However, the set of samples we do make

* Available from the **Functional Skills qualification documents webpage** (see Assessment materials dropdown for each level).

† Available from the Functional Skills qualification webpage as Flash files (see **Level 1** and **Level 2** dropdowns) **as well as via the e-volve system** (book via the Walled Garden, using 3748-84, 3748-85, 3748-86).

‡ Plus a further sample in-app instructions.

available will provide a complete ‘atlas’ of all coverage/range areas and types of activity found in the live assessments.

Reminder: new handbook documents now available

The Functional Skills handbook has now been split into **four** volumes:

- Qualifications handbook
containing administrative and assessment conduct/supervision guidance, as well as consolidating much of the additional information previously located in a discrete guide to the external assessments and FAQs document
- 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
the subject specification documents contain information about the content of each individual functional skill, along with relevant assessment preparation guidance for tutors and assessors.

Skills Funding Agency publishes Functional Skills success rates

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

Purpose: *public policy/strategy/funding*

The Skills Funding Agency (SFA) has recently published its national success rates tables for 2013-14 – including, for the first time, Functional Skills. The figures show an overall success rate of 66.5% across all ages/institutions/levels, with 63.1% amongst 16-18 learners and 71.7% for 19+ learners.

The success rates tables cover all types of publicly funded post-16 learning, differentiating between institution type as well as qualification type/level. The various tables can be accessed from the **SFA’s webpages on gov.uk**.

As we indicated in *Issue 09*, a complete set of Functional Skills assessment pass rates data covering each of the last four years is available from our **qualifications pages** (see assessment materials drop-down). It’s important not to confuse or conflate this data with *programme* success rates.

We’ve recently updated the pass rates data document (**v3-1** is the latest edition) to include a link to the national success rates tables.

Apprenticeships ‘five year rule’: further guidance from ACE

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

Purpose: *public policy/strategy/funding*

We indicated in *Issue 10* that there has recently been a change to the ‘Transferable Skills’ requirements within the Specification of Apprenticeship Standards for England (SASE), removing any time limits on the use of relevant GCSEs or Key Skills qualifications achieved prior to starting an Apprenticeship.

Apprenticeships Certificates England (ACE) has published further guidance on what these changes mean. It’s important to emphasise that the new arrangements only apply to Apprenticeships starting on or after 6 April 2015 – the ‘five year rule’ still applies to anyone already on-programme before that date. There’s a brief overview of the changes on the **ACE news pages**, as well as a more detailed guide within their **Knowledge Base**. The document is called **ACE Transferable Skills April 2015 (PDF)**.

Essential Skills Wales: after the trial, what now?

Relevant to: Essential Skills Wales (3768/3868); also Essential Skills Practitioner qualifications (8375) (Wales only)

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

The Welsh Government is due to confirm the final design principles for the new Essential Skills qualifications before the end of this month, following the recent controlled tasks trial managed by Colleges Wales and feedback from the four awarding organisations offering the new qualifications.

The trial has helped a number of Essential Skills practitioners from a range of providers to engage with the new assessment approach and test out some of the assumptions made in the initial design principles. Some key areas of uncertainty, such as expected minimum coverage and the number of activities within each controlled task, have now been clarified; there has also been further progress in firming up the scope and format of the confirmatory tests and guided discussions.

Changes expected to make their way into the final design principles include:

- Each controlled task is expected to cover at least 70% of the relevant standard.
- Essential Employability Skills will involve one controlled task, rather than two, although this will be backed up by a guided discussion between the assessor and candidate (NB: the term 'guided discussion' will be used, rather than 'professional discussion').
- The Speaking and Listening component of Essential Communication Skills will require a minimum of one discussion, rather than two.
- The confirmatory tests for Essential Communication Skills and Essential Application of Number Skills will be multiple choice format, with a maximum duration of around 30 minutes at levels 1 and 2 (Level 3 might be slightly longer). There will be one test per subject area.
- Both Essential Digital Literacy Skills and Essential Employability Skills will involve a 'guided discussion', in addition to the controlled task.
- There will be no Essential Skills Wales qualifications at Level 4.

What happens next?

The four awarding organisations are now working to finalise a template/blueprint controlled task for each essential skills and level. These will become available shortly after the design principles have been finalised, and will be used to inform development of the first batch of live controlled tasks.

Colleges Wales is also producing a comprehensive set of centre and learner guides to support teaching/learning, assessment and internal quality assurance of the new suite of Essential Skills qualifications. These will contain much of the information that would normally be found in one of our qualification handbooks, although we will also be producing our own handbook to cover anything specific/unique to Essential Skills with City & Guilds.

Launch event: now available to book

Following on from the initial series of centre briefings we held in March, we've organised a series of full-day launch events to help centres familiarise with the changes to these qualifications.

There are three dates:

- Thursday 25 June – Cardiff
- Friday 26 June – Cardiff
- Friday 3 July – Wrexham.

For further details, and to book your place, please visit our **Essential Skills events summary webpage**. Early booking is advisable, as demand for these events is likely to be very high.

Digital Literacy Practitioner qualification now available

Our new Level 3 Essential Skills Digital Literacy practitioner qualification (8375-04) is now available (see the **8375 qualification webpage** for handbook and other detailed information).

This qualification is currently being used as part of the Digital Literacy ‘train the trainer’ programme managed by Colleges Wales, although it is actually available to **all** centres/practitioners in Wales and beyond (eg some Functional Skills ICT tutors in England might also find it useful!).

Fast-track approval for the Digital Literacy pathway is available for existing 8375 centres.

The ‘12 week rule’: does it include maths and English qualifications?

Relevant to: *all* maths and English qualifications awarded by City & Guilds) (**England, Northern Ireland and Wales**)

Purpose: *operational note*

You might have seen that we have recently updated our Centre Manual, as well as the Our Quality Assurance Requirements document (see **Quality Assurance documents**, within our Centre Documents Library).

Paragraph **5.1.2** of the Centre Manual states:

Learners must be registered with City & Guilds for a qualification within 12 weeks of commencing the programme. There may be some exceptions to this (for example for short course programmes). Please refer to specific qualification and/or assessment documentation for details of any exceptions.

Even for exceptions of the 12 week rule, learners must be registered before accessing any live assessment material or undergoing any formal assessment.

Previous versions of the Centre Manual listed each of the qualifications exempted from the ‘12 week rule’. Typically, this has included qualifications where:

- delivery patterns vary considerably or could last less than 12 weeks
- learners might be working towards other qualifications as part of the same ‘programme’
- the qualification is ‘end-assessed’ without ongoing portfolio-building activity.

In the case of maths and English, there can be particular difficulties defining what is meant by ‘commencing the programme’ – eg is this when the learner was *first* enrolled at the centre, or when the learner specifically began working towards this particular qualification or group of qualifications? This has become especially complicated with the onset of study programmes where learners might attempt a range of maths/English qualifications and different times during their programme

For this reason, we took a decision in early 2012 to **exempt all maths and English qualifications from the 12 week rule**. This currently includes each of the following:

- Workplace Core Skills units (3658)
although these are subject to the SVQ '10 week rule'
- Augmentative and Alternative Communication (3716)
- Functional Skills (3748)
- Essential Skills Wales (3768)[§]
- Essential Skills (NI) (3800)
- Principles of Mathematics/English (3844)
- Essential Skills for Work and Life (3846)
- Mathematics/English Skills (3847)
- Using and Applying Mathematics (3849)
- ESOL Skills for Life (4692)

Even though the 12 week rule doesn't apply, learners must in **all** cases be registered with City & Guilds as a candidate for the relevant qualification before undergoing any formal assessment for that qualification or accessing any related live assessment material.

Essential Skills (NI): use of desktop tasks

Relevant to: *Essential Skills (NI) (3800) (Northern Ireland only)*

Purpose: *operational note*

Finally, a reminder that all of the current live assessment documents for the Essential Skills Northern Ireland qualifications are available to download from the qualifications webpage:

www.cityandguilds.com/essentialskillsni. Passwords can be obtained from the relevant Walled Garden Catalogue page.

The Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) is continuing to review these qualifications, after which there are likely to be changes to both the assessment materials and model. We'll keep you posted about this as and when we hear more from DEL, although we would expect each of the current Essential Skills qualifications to remain available until at least August 2016.

We are also very aware that some of the desktop tasks and Entry level tasks not been updated for some time (eg some even date back as far as 2003). Any decisions about how and when these are updated will depend at least partly on the longevity of the current qualifications' assessment model, although for the time being each of the titles available on our website remain authorised for use and part of the mandatory assessment regime for these qualifications.

[§] Will also include the new Essential Skills Wales qualifications (3868) when launched this autumn.

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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