

Agored Cymru; City & Guilds; Pearson and WJEC
Essential Application of Number Skills (EAoNS)
and Essential Communication Skills (EComms)
Confirmatory Test Pass Rates

How the confirmatory assessments are designed

The Essential Skills Wales confirmatory assessments are designed to measure whether or not a candidate has met the requirements of a particular Essential Skills Wales qualification. They are awarded on a pass/fail basis and are criterion-referenced. This means all who take an assessment and demonstrate that they consistently meet the required standard are awarded a pass.

EAoNS and EComms at levels 1, 2 and 3 are assessed through a Controlled Task and Confirmatory Test. The Confirmatory Test is intended to:

- confirm candidates' underpinning knowledge and skills in relation to the relevant standard;
- provide additional rigour to the assessment process.

All tests are based on a common, level specific test specification given in the Design Principles.

Each test paper consists entirely of fixed-response i.e. multiple-choice items which at:

- Level 1 has 20 questions with a maximum duration of 30 minutes.
- Level 2 also has 20 questions but with a maximum duration of 45 minutes.
- Level 3 has 30 questions with a maximum duration of 60 minutes.

Each multiple-choice item has one correct answer (key statement) with three strong distractors. Each item is worth one mark.

How we set the pass mark for each confirmatory assessment

A mark that represents the minimum standard of performance required for a candidate to pass is determined for each test paper. This expectation is set out in the Design Principles as follows:

A pass mark will be determined for each test following an agreed statistical procedure. The statistical method used for EAoNS and ECOMMS is the 'modified' Angoff.

Angoff is one of the methods used to ensure that pass marks set for multiple choice tests are as secure as possible. It primarily uses the judgement of 'Subject Matter Experts' (SMEs) to predict the ability of minimally competent candidates to correctly answer each question. The scores obtained are averaged then used to set the

agreed pass mark for each test paper. The pass mark for each individual confirmatory test is a reflection of the minimum number of marks that a candidate must achieve in order to meet the qualification standard. Each Essential Skills Wales assessment has its own pass mark and is an accurate reflection of a range of expert judgement.

A regular data review process is undertaken to ensure fairness to all candidates. This includes a:

- review of comparative statistics showing how each assessment performed and
- a review of individual test items that are not performing as expected.

The data review considers the impact of item performance issues or slight differences between assessment versions so that these can be taken into account to ensure that candidates are not potentially disadvantaged.

For these reasons the pass mark may vary from one paper to another for a particular subject and level. Usually, the pass marks will fall within a range of a few marks (notional 70%).

The following figures represent the upper end of the range of pass marks for each subject and level as at March 2019:

Subject/Level	Pass Mark	Out of (total marks):
EAoNS Level 1	14	20
EAoNS Level 2	14	20
EAoNS Level 3	21	30
ECommS Level 1	14	20
ECommS Level 2	14	20
ECommS Level 3	21	30

The following figures represent the range of pass marks for each subject and level to date:

Subject/Level	Pass Mark (Range per paper)	Out of (total marks):
EAoNS Level 1	14	20
EAoNS Level 2	14	20
EAoNS Level 3	21	30
ECommS Level 1	13 -- 14	20
ECommS Level 2	13 - 14	20
ECommS Level 3	20 - 23	30

Pass Rates

The pass rate for each assessment version is the number of times a particular assessment has been passed, as a percentage of the total number of times that assessment has been attempted. The figures are affected by candidates resitting assessments and centres should bear this in mind when interpreting them. The Essential Skills Wales assessments are available on demand from a bank of assessments. The pass rate obtained when a test is first introduced may not truly indicate the difficulty of the test as the number of attempts included in the analysis may not be large enough for true statistical validity. For this reason, any pass rate will be a 'snapshot' of performance based on the data available at the time of calculation.

The following average pass rates for each Essential Skills Wales subject and level are published for information and to help centres gauge their own performance. These are based on performance of candidates in Essential Skills Wales tests from October 2019 to March 2020. 'Normally', pass rates are kept under continuous review and we will update the information published, when necessary, to ensure these remain accurate. Over the past year there has been little substantive data to review and the latest information is therefore for the immediate 'pre-Covid' period.

Subject/Level/Medium	Number of Times Test Taken	Pass rate
EAoNS Level 1 (ENG)	2849	73%
EAoNS Level 2 (ENG)	3551	62%
EAoNS Level 3 (ENG)	53	43%
EAoNS Level 1 (CYM)	2	100%
EAoNS Level 2 (CYM)	3	33%
EAoNS Level 3 (CYM)	0	N/A
ECommS Level 1	2058	82%
ECommS Level 2	3586	76%
ECommS Level 3	530	80%

The following information is available to support centres preparing candidates to take Essential Skills Wales assessments:

Guidance for Delivery

Guidance documents for the delivery of Essential Application of Number Skills / Essential Communication Skills have been developed to enable candidates and centres to better understand the structure of the assessments, the types of item, and breadth of range which could occur in live assessments.

Sample Assessments

We make available a number of sample assessments for each Essential Skills subject area at each level for centres to help prepare candidates for the assessment. These are written and standardised using the same process and level of scrutiny as live papers or are retired past papers, which ensures maintenance of standards. As such, our sample assessments draw content from across the whole syllabus and are therefore not exhaustive; we try to ensure that these cover as much breadth as possible and aim to familiarise learners with a variety of question types and assessment scenarios. We recommend that these are used in conjunction with the Guidance for Delivery documents.

Centre Communications

During the data review activity, the performance of candidates for each area of the curriculum is monitored to establish where there may be particular aspects that are proving problematic for learners. The findings are shared by each awarding body with their centres as recommended teaching points.

Evaluation

The Essential Skills Wales assessments are kept under close and ongoing evaluation, and we strive to make continual improvements to them. We are always exploring ways to improve fairness, accessibility and candidate experience. To this end, findings from the continuous monitoring are fed back into the development process.

Feedback

We welcome centres' feedback on the Essential Skills Wales assessments. Please email your associated Awarding Body: