Essential Skills Wales Application of Number (EAoNS)
and Communication Skills (ECommS)
Confirmatory Test Pass Rates
from 01/04/2020 - 31/10/2021

Adaptations for Essential Skills Wales qualifications
In response to the Covid-19 pandemic, adaptations were in place until 31st October 2021 for both skills where candidates were certificated upon successful completion of the confirmatory test only. Where it was not possible for a candidate to complete a confirmatory test, there was the option for the centre to submit a Centre Assessed Grade (CAG) or later in the pandemic, a Centre Determined Grade (CDG). Therefore, this data covers the whole of the period when adaptations were in place. From 1st November 2021 certification again reverted to successful completion of a task and test.

The above factors should be borne in mind when the data presented here is considered.

How the confirmatory assessments are designed
The Essential Skills Wales confirmatory assessments are designed to measure whether 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 reflects the minimum number of marks that a candidate must achieve 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 during this period ie 01/04/2020 - 31/10/2021.

Subject/Level	Pass Mark	Out of (total marks)
Application of Number Level 1	14	20
Application of Number Level 2	14	20
Application of Number Level 3	21	30
Communication Level 1	14	20
Communication Level 2	14	20
Communication Level 3	21	30

The following figures represent the range of pass marks for each subject and level during this period i.e. 01/04/2020 - 31/10/2021.

Subject/Level	Pass Mark (Range per paper)	Out of (total marks)
Application of Number Level 1	14	20
Application of Number Level 2	13 – 14	20
Application of Number Level 3	21	30
Communication Level 1	13 – 14	20
Communication Level 2	13 – 14	20
Communication 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 April 2020 to October 2021.

Subject/Level/Medium	Number of times test taken	Pass Rate
Application of Number Level 1 (ENG)	5330	70%
Application of Number Level 2 (ENG)	8877	59%
Application of Number Level 3 (ENG)	156	39%
Application of Number Level 1 (CYM)	15	60%
Application of Number Level 2 (CYM)	55	33%
Application of Number Level 3 (CYM)	2	0%
Communication Level 1	5619	82%
Communication Level 1	9314	84%
Communication Level 1	2298	71%

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

Guidance for Delivery
Guidance for Delivery of EAoNS/ECommS documents have been developed to enable candidates and centres to better understand the structure of the assessments, the types of items, and breadth of range which could occur in live assessments.

Sample Assessments
We make available several 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 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.

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