

FUNCTIONAL SKILLS SUPPORT GUIDANCE FOR PRACTITIONERS

1. Functional Skills – an overview

This guidance document provides an update on the latest functional skills pilot developments as well as links to functional skills support materials, guidance and other helpful resources.

The functional skills (FS) pilot qualifications in English, mathematics and ICT commenced delivery in September 2007 in a range of learning environments, including schools, colleges, adult and community learning providers, and through local authority projects. The pilot programme will continue for three years with the full qualifications being introduced in September 2010.

Functional skills are the core elements of English, mathematics and ICT that provide individuals with the essential knowledge, skills and understanding that enable them to operate confidently, effectively and independently in life, further learning and work. These skills are being delivered through the functional skills pilot qualifications, which are independently assessed, skills-based qualifications, available from entry level to level 2.

Given the importance of these skills, they are also being introduced as key features of the curriculum and qualifications routes for GCSEs, Diplomas, Apprenticeships and Foundation Learning Tier.

The pilot phase is supported by a national workforce development programme, led by the Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS), and the National Strategies (NS). There will also be a programme of support to prepare non-pilot centres to deliver and assess functional skills in the relevant qualification routes from September 2010.

The pilot programme is subject to a comprehensive evaluation programme. It is designed to access views, experience and expertise from across the education sector and beyond. We would like to encourage all interested parties to engage with the materials contained in this document and to contribute to these important developments through the various events, consultations, support networks and enquiry channels provided.

The FS workforce development support programme information is available at: <http://excellence.qia.org.uk/functionalskills>, and <http://www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies>.

The practitioner guidance includes:

- Functional skills training and support available
- Functional skills and the Diploma (includes information about the Diploma query resolution process)
- Functional skills for adults
- Functional skills: joining the pilot
- Functional skills: awarding bodies
- Functional skills: qualification development

2. Functional Skills: training and support available. What's on offer with FS workforce development training and support programme?

There is a range of support available to help you with the challenges ahead for delivering the functional skills qualifications. The National Strategies (NS) and the Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS) have information on their websites about their comprehensive support programme for preparing practitioners. Support programmes are also accessible on the Learning and Skills Network website to support the introduction of functional skills. The programme offers in-house training, network meetings, practical advice, publications and materials which can be downloaded from the websites. A team of Functional Skills Regional Coordinators (FSRCs) and National Strategy Regional Advisors (NSRAs) are also available to offer support. The table highlights the kind of support that is available.

Further details on the training programmes can be accessed on the following websites:

National Strategies (NS)

<http://www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies>

<http://www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/secondarykeystage4/lss/ks4/fssp/>

Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS)

<http://www.excellence.qia.org.uk/page.aspx?>

Learning and Skills Network (LSN)

<http://www.lsneducation.org.uk/functionalskills/>

3. Functional Skills and the Diploma

All Diplomas require students to achieve functional skills in English, mathematics and ICT. Functional skills must be achieved at level 1 for a Foundation Diploma, and Level 2 for a Higher and Advanced Diploma. Achievement of all three functional skills is necessary in order to be awarded the overall Diploma.

All centres delivering Diplomas from 2008 can also be FS pilot centres so that they are able to deliver FS to their learners. Consortia delivering Diplomas from September 2009 will already have centres participating in the FS pilot to begin preparing for delivery from 2009.

It will not be necessary for centres delivering Diplomas from 2010 to join the FS pilot in September 2009 except where centres are intending to deliver Advanced Diplomas to learners from 2010. Those centres can join the FS pilot from September 2009 so that prospective Advanced Diploma learners will be able to take level 2 functional skills assessments before starting their Advanced Diploma in 2010. From 2012 onwards the majority of Advanced Diploma learners will already have completed their functional skills qualifications either as part of a Higher Diploma or alongside their GCSEs.

For more information about the Diploma and the Diploma Gateway, please go to the following link at: www.dcsf.gov.uk/14-19. The guidance on Diplomas curriculum and design, including principal learning and embedding FS is accessible on the QCA website address at: www.qca.org.uk/qca_13473.aspx.

Query Resolution Process - There is a Query Resolution Process in place to ensure that consortia questions/issues are resolved or escalated quickly and efficiently. Information can be found on the DCSF 14-19 website. For example, if you are dealing with FS in the interests of the 14-19 Diplomas, you can go to the query resolution section on the DCSF 14-19 website address: www.dcsf.gov.uk/14-19/Delivery2008. The website contains information about Diploma delivery from September 2008, including a FAQ on functional skills and contacts for the area to which your query relates and some useful links.

4. Functional Skills and Adults: where are we now?

The functional skills pilot already has representation from a number of adult learning centres but from autumn 2008, QCA and awarding bodies will be undertaking further functional skills piloting with adult literacy and numeracy centres and candidates. The

purpose of this is to establish the suitability of the Functional English and mathematics qualifications for adult learners and their capacity to build upon the existing system in terms of flexibility of assessment delivery and use of e-assessment. The outcomes of this work will inform policy decisions on the introduction of functional skills qualifications for Skill for Life learners. Go to the QCA website address at: www.qca.org.uk/functionalskills for more information.

5. Functional Skills – Joining the Pilot

The pilot project timelines are:

- September 2008 – Year 2 centres join pilot. Teaching begins for first Diploma lines of learning
- September 2009 – Year 3 centres join the pilot
- Spring 2010: Awarding Bodies submit functional skills qualifications for re-accreditation
- September 2010: First teaching of FS begins. New GCSEs in English, ICT and mathematics begin.

Further information about these timelines is accessible on the QCA website at:<http://www.qca.org.uk/qca.19076.aspx>.

6. Functional Skills: Awarding Bodies

Awarding Bodies offer a variety of guidance and support around their particular specifications and assessment methods, details of which can be found at the website addresses as below:

AQA:

http://www.aqa.org.uk/qual/gcse/functional_skills.php

City & Guilds:

<http://www.cityandguilds.com/cps/rde/xchg/cgonline/hs.xsl/19824.html?vroot=16>

ASDAN:

http://asdan.org.uk/functional_skills.php

Edexcel:

<http://www.developments.edexcel.org/fs/tqns/>

EDI: http://www.ediplc.com/Qualifications_Search.asp

NOCN:

<http://www.nocn.org.uk/learning-providers/nocn-and-functional-skills/about-the-nocn-functional-skills-qualifications>

NCFE:

<http://www.ncfe.org.uk/Default.aspx?id=18148>

OCNW:

<http://www.ocnw.com/News/FunctionalSkills/tabid/156/Default.aspx>

OCR:

<http://www.ocr.org.uk/qualifications/1419changes/functionalskills/index.html>

VTCT:

<http://www.vtct.org.uk/>

WJEC: <http://www.wjec.co.uk/index.php?level=140&subject=30>.

7. Functional Skills: Qualification Development. Find out more FS qualifications development

Go to the QCA website on www.qca.org.uk/functionalskills, for the latest information on the development of the qualifications, including guidance materials.

Through the QCA website you can get information relating to the different aspects of the pilot programme (including FAQs), identify the eleven Awarding Bodies delivering FS, access the FS standards (including the hardcopy booklet free of charge), access guidance materials, and download the FS bulletins.

You can also access on the website, the FS assessment principles for the second year of the programme. These documents contain definitions regarding FS test and task-based assessments for use from entry level to level 2. They are a means for regulating and evaluating the pilot qualifications from a range of awarding bodies as well as providing the necessary degree of consistency and comparability during the pilot phase.

The second year principles provide a greater level of detail to ensure that the awarding bodies clearly understand and are confident about the expectations for functional skills assessment design and delivery from September 2008 to September 2009. These documents are accessible on the QCA website, **under the “related documents” section on the website:**

- Assessment Principles for FS pilot (English) 2008-2009
- Assessment principles for FS pilot (mathematics) 2008-2009
- Assessment principles for FS pilot (ICT) 2008-2009

The Assessment Principles are available at: http://www.qca.org.uk/qca_19777.aspx, and for download of hard copies.

Functional skills support programme

QIA and NS offer support on functional skills. Updated detail of the training available is set out below.

Training	Who can access?	How?	When?
<p>Modules for English, maths and ICT teachers in schools Module titles: Teaching Functional Skills:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. From building skills to applying; 2. Within real, purposeful and relevant contexts 3. Assessing progress; 4. From Entry Level to level 1 	<p>English, maths and ICT teachers from schools participating in the pilot, including from Gateway 1 and Gateway 2 consortia</p>	<p>Through the National Strategies http://www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies</p>	<p>Modules 1&2 from December 2008. Modules 3&4 from February 2009.</p>
<p>Modules for other FS providers and Diploma consortia. Module titles:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Functional skills in Diplomas for managers 2. Teaching functional English 3. Teaching functional Mathematics 4. Teaching functional ICT 5. Delivering functional skills in FLT's 6. Delivering functional skills in Diplomas 7. Delivering functional skills in Apprenticeships 8. Moving up a level: progressing from Entry 3 to Level 1 in functional skills 9. Teaching Mastery through problem solving approaches in functional 	<p>FS practitioners in colleges, adult providers, work-based learning. Also leaders and managers in Diploma consortia, FS leads and other staff in consortia</p>	<p>Through the Learning and Skills Improvement Service, by contacting your FSRC – contact details can be found on the excellence gateway http://excellence.qia.org.uk/functionalskills</p>	<p>Available ongoing from October 2008</p>

skills			
Functional skills network meetings	For pilot and non pilot centres to find practical solutions to regional delivery challenges	Book through the QIA excellence gateway http://excellence.qia.org.uk/functionalskills	First series in November also in January and March – dates are on the QIA Excellence Gateway
Functional skills regional co-ordinators (FSRCs) <i>Offer bespoke advice and training to support all pilot centres</i>	All pilot centres except English, mathematics and ICT specialists in Schools	Contact details are at http://excellence.qia.org.uk/159679	On-going from September 08
National Strategies regional advisers on FS	All LAs and schools in Gateway 1 & 2 consortia including those working with awarding bodies.	Contact details available from the National Strategies: telephone 0118 918 2820 or email functionalskills@nationalstrategies.co.uk .	
Resources <i>-Exemplification and amplification of FS</i> <i>-Functional skills and the Diploma</i>		Download from: www.qca.org.uk/functionalskills www.qca.org.uk/qca_17941.aspx http://excellence.qia.org.uk/functionalskills .	

<p><i>-Teaching and learning resources to support the planning and delivery of functional skills,</i></p> <p><i>FS in the first five Diploma lines of learning</i></p> <p><i>-Revised Publications – Managing Delivery, Teaching and Learning functional English, mathematics and ICT</i></p>	<p>Hard copies distributed to all pilot centres and also available on line on the excellence gateway</p>	<p>http://excellence.qia.org.uk/159670#development</p>	<p>Due out in January 09</p>
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