



Factsheet 30

Functional Skills

What are Functional Skills?

Functional Skills are practical skills in English, information and communication technology and mathematics. They allow individuals to work confidently, effectively and independently in life. Functional Skills are not simply about knowledge in maths, English and ICT but knowing when and how to use this knowledge and skills in real life contexts. In developing Functional Skills learners can adapt and apply what they have learned to suit different situations in their everyday life. Functional Skills reinforce skills in communication, problem solving, listening and time management.

Functional skills in English are divided into three distinct areas, reading, writing and speaking and listening and learners will be assessed separately for each area.

Functional Skills are currently offered at Entry Level and Levels 1 and 2.

Who will do Functional Skills?

Functional Skills are:

- a component of the new Diplomas
- a part of the Foundation Learning programme
- one of the components of apprenticeship frameworks (Key Skills can be offered instead of Functional Skills up to September 2012)

Young people working towards a Diploma or on a Foundation Learning programme will achieve Functional Skills. Some apprentices will also achieve Functional Skills as part of their apprenticeship framework.

What's the difference between Key Skills and Functional Skills?

Key Skills consists of two assessment components:

- a generic multiple choice test
- a portfolio of evidence which learners develop during their time on a vocational programme

Functional Skills' assessments are open response, task-based assessments which require problem solving and transferable skills. Functional Skills do not include a portfolio assessment.

Learners take separate tests for English, maths and ICT at the appropriate levels.

Do all learners have to do Functional Skills?

Learners on Diploma and Foundation Learning courses will do Functional Skills as part of their learning programmes.

Apprentices can continue to work towards Key Skills until September 2012. (Some apprentices will be exempt from Functional Skills if they have achieved GCSEs at grades A* - C within the previous five years).

Functional Skills and GCSEs

A Functional Skill at Level 1 is equivalent to a GCSE grade D - F and a Functional Skill at Level 2 is equivalent to a GCSE Grade A - C.