

# FUNCTIONAL SKILLS QUALIFICATIONS

What are functional skills? Who are they for and how do they work?

If an apprentice doesn't have GCSE English or maths qualifications at the required grade, they will need to achieve Functional Skills qualifications during their apprenticeship in order to complete it.

## What are Functional Skills qualifications?

Functional Skills qualifications assess English, maths and ICT skills and are designed to help equip people with the skills they may need in their working lives.

## What Functional Skills levels are there?

Functional skills level	GCSE equivalence
Entry Level 1	Below GCSE level
Entry Level 2	
Entry Level 3	
Level 1	GCSE grades 1-3
Level 2	GCSE grade 4+

## How do you know which level is required?

For all apprentices undertaking a level 3, 4, 5, 6 or 7 apprenticeship, it is a requirement that they hold or achieve a level 2 Functional Skills qualification in English and maths (or another approved qualification) before they can successfully complete the apprenticeship.

For level 2 apprenticeships, if the apprentice **has not achieved** a GCSE grade 3 to 1 (or D to G) in English and/or maths, they will need to study towards and achieve at least level 1 Functional Skills. Once this is secured, they must then work towards level 2 English and/or maths Functional Skills when there is time to make meaningful progress. However, they are not required to be assessed at level 2 unless their provider is satisfied they are ready.

If a level 2 apprentice **does have** a GCSE grade 3 to 1 (or D to G) in English or maths, they would need to start, continue to study and take the assessments for a level 2 English and/or maths Functional Skills before they take the end-point assessment.

From the 1st August 2024, some new exceptions have been introduced. Please see the next page.

## Evidencing your qualifications

In order to be exempt from taking Functional Skills, apprentices will be required to provide copies of their GCSE (or equivalent) certificates.



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and how do they work?

## How is your starting point assessed?

Apprentices will be asked to complete an initial assessment of their English and maths skills, which determines their starting level. They then complete a diagnostic assessment to find out what they are already good at and what they need to work on.

## Are there exceptions to English and maths Functional Skills requirements if an apprentice has an Education, Health and Care plan (EHC plan) or statement of learning difficulties assessment (LDA)?

There is an exception made for individuals with special educational needs, learning difficulties and disabilities if the apprentice has either an existing or previously issued education, health and care (EHC) plan, or one of the legacy equivalents: a statement of special educational need (SEN) or a learning difficulty assessment (LDA).

As long as the provider and the employer expect the apprentice to achieve all other aspects of the apprenticeship, the functional skills requirements can be adjusted to the apprentice achieving entry level 3 Functional Skills before the end of their apprenticeship.

## What if an apprentice has additional needs, but doesn't have an EHC plan?

Following [changes introduced from 1st August 2024](#), training providers are now allowed to identify that apprentices have a learning difficulty or disability which is a barrier to them being able to achieve their English and maths qualifications at level 1 or 2.

They can then assess whether it would be more appropriate for them to study and achieve the lower requirement of an entry level 3 in English and maths.

## How are apprentices supported to prepare for Functional Skills exams?

In most cases, training providers are responsible for the delivery of Functional Skills courses and for supporting apprentices to achieve the qualifications.

## Who organises the Functional Skills assessments and exams?

The training provider is responsible for the organisation of the apprentice achieving their Functional Skills qualifications.

## Are there access arrangements for Functional Skills exams?

If you are entitled to access arrangements, for example extra time, speak to your provider who should be responsible for arranging this with the exam board and providing supporting evidence.



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## How are Functional Skills assessed?

There aren't any coursework or portfolio-based elements, and the qualification result is based solely on exam papers.

For entry-level qualifications, papers are assessed internally. Level 1 and 2 exams can be taken online or as paper-based assessments. The online exams can be taken on demand whenever the learner feels ready, but paper exams must be completed when the awarding body sets dates.

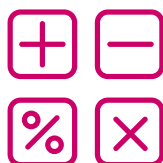
## What do Functional Skills exams consist of?

It can vary depending on the level and the exam board, but typically the exams consist of:

### Maths:

Exam with two parts:

- Non-calculator
- Calculator



### English:

- Reading exam
- Writing exam
- Speaking, listening and communication exam



## How are Functional Skills graded?

All Functional Skills assessments are graded as either pass or fail.

## Do apprentices have to pay to take the exams?

No, the government funds up to level 2 English and maths qualifications for apprentices who don't already have suitable equivalent qualifications. This funding covers the cost of:

- Initial and diagnostic assessments
- Delivery costs
- Examination fees

## How long does an apprentice need to study before taking the Functional Skills exams?

It depends on the level of their English and maths skills when they start the apprenticeship. For example, some apprentices may be able to achieve the qualifications within the first six months of an apprenticeship programme, but others may take the duration of their apprenticeship.

It is important not to worry about taking Functional Skills qualifications or let it put you off becoming an apprentice - your training provider and employer will support you and there is lots of advice, guidance and practice online.

