

Functional Skills Update

Welcome to the sixth edition of Edexcel's Functional Skills update (previously 'Insight')

This aims to help keep you up-to-date with functional skills developments and keep you informed of the support available during the functional skills pilot programme. It has been designed for pilot centres, including Gateway consortia, adult institutes and interested centres that wish to know more about these developments.

What are Functional Skills?

The 14-19 and Skills White Papers in England announced the introduction of 'functional' English, mathematics and ICT qualifications for young people and adults.

Functional Skills are practical skills in English, mathematics and Information Communication Technology (ICT) that allow individuals to operate confidently, effectively and independently in life.

Functional skills and their relationship to other qualifications

Available as stand-alone qualifications, they will also form part of GCSEs in English, mathematics and ICT, Diplomas, apprenticeships and the Foundation Learning Tier. We are currently piloting the standards and assessment for functional skills with more than 200 centres. Our experienced pilot team continues to evaluate the process to ensure that it meets the needs of our centres and is fit for purpose.

Functional skills achievements will not affect GCSE candidates' results during the pilot phase. Candidates who pass their Functional Skills qualification will be awarded a Functional Skills Certificate stating which subjects and levels they have passed.

Functional skills qualifications at all levels will carry performance points for the achievement and attainment tables. Decisions as to what these will be have yet to be announced.

Diplomas

Diplomas require learners to gain functional skills in English, mathematics and ICT:

- at level 1 for the level 1 Diploma
- at level 2 for Diplomas at levels 2 and 3.

Learners will have opportunities to develop and apply functional skills across the Diploma curriculum.

Many Diploma centres may have concerns about getting their Diploma learners through Functional Skills in advance of the full roll-out of the new qualifications in 2010. We will be supporting you throughout this pilot ensuring your consortium has up-to-date information on Functional Skills assessment and sharing best practice in timetabling across the consortia.

Apprenticeships

Although final decisions have not yet been made, the expectation is that Functional Skills will replace key skills; the wider key skills are likely to remain in apprenticeship frameworks. Edexcel are in the process of developing a new embedded apprenticeship package for centres. This will include a new technical certificate with the option of computer based testing and e-portfolios. For more information please contact Tayyaba Azam on 020 7918 4238.

Foundation Learning Tier

The Foundation Learning Tier (FLT) is the umbrella term for all provision below Level 2 that is taken by learners over the age of 14 (ie it includes adult learners). Learning programmes in FLT will draw on three curriculum areas: personal and social development, vocational/subject-based learning, and key and basic skills (to be replaced by Functional Skills). For details about the Foundation Learning Tier, see www.qca.org.uk/flt.

Helping you through the transition

Helping learners to become more 'functional' should be supported by building existing practices in teaching literacy, numeracy and ICT skills including:

- learner-centred and problem-solving approaches
- learning through application
- partnerships.

Support for All

All centres involved in the pilots should have now received a copy of our sample assessment materials. If you have not received a hard copy, please get in touch with the pilot team at fspilot.recruitment@edexcel.org.uk or download a copy from our website at <http://developments.edexcel.org.uk/fs/assessment/>.

Support through training and briefings

Edexcel's specifically developed training package is designed to assist and support you in delivering and managing functional skills as well as providing opportunities for networking. It will be delivered via separate events for English, mathematics and ICT and contains:

Functional skills training for teachers

- planning, delivering and managing functional skills
- tips and guidance on teaching and learning
- guidance on moving from teaching in vocational contexts to life skills contexts
- preparing learners for assessment.

Functional skills briefings for managers/advisers

- the rationale and intention behind functional skills
- suggestions and recommendation for the introduction of functional skills
- assessment models.

Training will take place from February to April and a list of dates have been circulated to pilot centres.

Training will be available for all pilot centres as well as registered centres who are planning to offer Functional Skills in the near future.

Functional skills support

Edexcel has an extensive support network, providing guidance and support for all those delivering functional skills including:-

Online help and advice

We've embraced the latest technology in order to provide practical help for you and your students.

Edexcel online provides you with notifications and confirmations at every stage of candidate administration.

If you have a specific functional skills query we have a frequently asked question sheet on our website and our **Ask the Expert** email service will put you in direct contact with subject experts who will answer more technical questions.

To help analyse your students' exam results by viewing exam papers, marking schemes, examiners reports and comparing individual results we offer all our centres **ResultsPlus** <http://resultsplus.edexcel.org.uk/home/>.

We are determined to provide the best support to help you deliver functional skills easily and effectively. We will produce extensive teacher guidance and support for students. Bite-size text pages will be available on-line during the pilot phase, this is to ensure we are receiving customer feedback and meeting requirements before the production of text books.

Throughout the pilot we will be gathering **best practice** and producing **case studies** to share with all our centres.

We will be working towards on-screen, on demand assessment with a minimal trial for some centres during the pilot.

Entries for each full subject assessment will be £12.50.

Express interest in the pilots here

<http://developments.edexcel.org.uk/fs/>

Alternatively contact your local Edexcel Curriculum Development Manager.

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