

Functional Skills: Moving forward

Insight 3

www.edexcel.org.uk/functional-skills

What are the latest development in the trials?

Edexcel has committed to trialling methods of e-assessment as part of our flexible, on-demand solution to function skills assessment. To achieve this, we are working with centres to conduct in-depth tests and wider research on the impact of on-demand e-assessment on your centre.

Centres were asked to review their current e-assessment capability. They were also asked to join a regional functional skills trials event to feedback their views on e-assessment and how to prepare for functional skills. The regional events are planned to take place at the end of February 2007 in the Edexcel Regional Offices.

To get the latest reports and feedback from the trials as they become available, please visit www.edexcel.org.uk/functional-skills and register for email alerts.

Purpose of the trials

- Ensure the standards are appropriate for qualifications and their assessment.
- Recommend suitable assessment approaches.
- Identify issues of assessment with GCSE qualifications.

- Ensure assessment is appropriate across all centres and all learners.
- Consider qualification structure.
- Consider issues of legacy with existing qualifications, Public Service Agreements (PSA) targets and attainment tables.

How will assessment work?

At this time we do not know what the preferred method of assessment for any of the functional skills will be. The Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) have tasked the awarding bodies to trial alternative methods of assessment, so each awarding body is doing something different. Therefore it is possible that centres have been approached by several awarding bodies to take part in trials and offered different ways of assessing the functional skills.

What are the regulators doing?

Awarding bodies have been asked to feedback on their trial research during March and April 2007. Recommendations will then go to ministers, who will have the final approval for the assessment process. The qualifications and the pilot arrangements are due to be finalised by the end of May so that piloting can start in September 2007.

This is a tight timeline?

We recognise that the timeline is tight and that there will be little time to prepare for the pilot phase, so every step will be taken to ensure that you have all the support and guidance that you need. It should also be recognised that the pilot phase will last two years for English and ICT and three years for mathematics. This will allow time to fully evaluate how the qualifications work with all types of learners in all types of settings.

Functional skills and adults

It is suggested that functional skills will develop to:

- complement BTEC and NVQ programmes
- be part of apprenticeship frameworks
- assist adults in improving their skills development (maintaining the current role of Skills for Life).

Colleges already offering embedded key and basic skills will be very well placed to move forward in the delivery and assessment of functional skills.

What you wanted to know!

We are updating Ask Edexcel (www.edexcel.org.uk/ask) with your functional skills questions and answers. Please continue to use this service for functional skills questions.

A selection of questions that you have asked:

Why are there no Level 3 draft criteria?

QCA has decided to concentrate on the Entry, Level 1 and 2 criteria for the trials and pilots. Level 3 will be developed in due course.

What will happen to the adult core curriculum when functional skills are introduced?

We anticipate that the principles behind the core curriculum will remain during the transition from adult basic skills to functional skills, although there may need to be some updating to reflect the new standards.

Will there be a steer towards a preferred mode of delivery?

We anticipate that alternative methods of delivery will reflect the needs of the learner, so these methods of delivery will be encouraged.

If centres are running a joint programme with another organisation where functional skills are developed across the provision, who will assess the functional skills?

We favour an e-assessment model which will mean that the learner will take a test when they are ready to achieve (rather like the current adult literacy and numeracy qualifications). Therefore either organisation can in principle assess.

This information sheet is intended to help centres keep up to date with functional skills development. Information is correct at the time of writing and is offered in good faith. No liability is accepted for decisions made on the basis of the information given.

www.edexcel.org.uk/functional-skills

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