

LEVEL 1 AND 2 FUNCTIONAL SKILLS IN **ENGLISH**

(8720/8725)

Specification

For teaching from September 2019 onwards

For exams January 2020 onwards

Version 1.2 February 2021



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Are you using the latest version of these specifications?

- You will always find the most up-to-date version of these specifications on our website at [aqa.org.uk/8720](https://www.aqa.org.uk/8720)
- We will write to you if there are significant changes to these specifications.

1 Introduction

1.1 Why choose AQA Level 1 and 2 Functional Skills in English

A specification designed for you and your learners

Our assessments have been designed to inspire and motivate learners, providing appropriate opportunities to demonstrate their competence in English using real-world situations. With scheduled multiple opportunities for assessment you can tailor your delivery for learners of all abilities.

The specification will enable learners to develop confidence in English skills, preparing them for progression into employment or further education and for use in their daily lives.

Engaging and accessible content

The specification offers two equally-balanced papers across both levels. The Reading and Writing sources and stimuli provide learners with real-world situations and texts to engage their interest.

The speaking, listening and communicating unit will emphasise the wider benefits that speaking and listening skills have for learners. It allows learners to develop their presentation and discussion skills around topics of their own choice. This will enable the full range of learners to engage in a way that is tailored to their experiences and areas of interest.

Skills-based approach

Writing tasks give learners the opportunity to produce texts of different lengths and for different audiences, building the skills needed to adapt responses to situations. Questions in reading are designed to truly assess a learner's ability to understand different texts, using question formats to minimise writing demand.

Teach learners together

The specification is structured to make it easier to teach your learners. Your Functional Skills English and GCSE English Language learners can work towards their achievements together.

We're behind you every step of the way

We have developed the specification in consultation with practising Functional Skills teachers, to ensure it meets the needs of learners and teachers and provides high quality assessment and good provision for English. It offers excellent preparation for employment and further education, equipping learners with the life-skills they need to succeed.

With AQA you can rest assured that your learners will receive the result that fairly represents their attainment and reflects the skills that they have demonstrated.

You can find out about all our English qualifications at [aqa.org.uk/english](https://www.aqa.org.uk/english)

1.2 Support and resources to help you teach

We know that support and resources are vital. So we've worked with experienced teachers to provide you with a range of resources that will help you plan, teach and prepare for exams with confidence.

Teaching resources

Our resources include:

- Additional specimen papers
- Example responses for Reading and Writing
- NEA guidance
- Summary of changes
- Switching guide
- Subject specific vocabulary.

Preparing for exams

Visit [aqa.org.uk/english](https://www.aqa.org.uk/english) for everything you need to prepare for our exams, including:

- past papers, mark schemes and examiners' reports from the legacy specification 4720/4725
- specimen papers and mark schemes for new courses.

Keep your skills up-to-date with professional development

Wherever you are in your career, there's always something new to learn. As well as subject-specific training, we offer a range of courses to help boost your skills.

You can attend a course at venues around the country, in your school or online – whatever suits your needs and availability. Find out more at [coursesandevents.aqa.org.uk](https://www.coursesandevents.aqa.org.uk)

Help and support

Visit our website for information, guidance, support and resources at [aqa.org.uk/subjects/english](https://www.aqa.org.uk/subjects/english)

You can talk directly to the English subject team.

E: english-gcse@aca.org.uk

T: 0161 953 7504

2 Specification at a glance

Subject content

- 1 Reading
- 2 Writing
- 3 Speaking, listening and communicating

Assessments

AQA Level 1 and 2 Functional Skills in English are modular. Learners can sit all three assessments in their chosen level in different series, but they must pass all three to gain the qualification.

Paper 1: Reading	+	Paper 2: Writing	+	Non-exam assessment: Speaking, listening and communicating
<p>What's assessed</p> <p>All the scope of study statements for Reading at the appropriate level</p>		<p>What's assessed</p> <p>All the scope of study statements for Writing at the appropriate level</p>		<p>What's assessed</p> <p>All the scope of study statements for Speaking, listening and communicating at the appropriate level</p>
<p>How it's assessed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Written exam: 1 hour • Paper based • Level 1 – 26 marks • Level 2 – 30 marks • 33.3% of the AQA Level 1 and 2 Functional Skills in English • Set and marked by AQA 		<p>How it's assessed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Written exam: 1 hour • Paper based • Level 1 – 27 marks • Level 2 – 30 marks • 33.3% of the AQA Level 1 and 2 Functional Skills in English • Set and marked by AQA 		<p>How it's assessed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tasks set by centre in line with AQA guidelines • Marked by centre using pass criteria • 33.3% of the AQA Level 1 and 2 Functional Skills in English
<p>Questions</p> <p>A mix of question styles, including multiple choice and short response. Learners should be given access to a dictionary</p>		<p>Questions</p> <p>Two writing tasks, including 12 marks for spelling, punctuation and grammar. Learners must not have access to dictionaries or any spelling or grammar aid</p>		<p>Questions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One presentation task • One discussion task

3 Subject content

The specification content covers the scope of study for each of the three separate components. For ease of comparison Level 1 and Level 2 content is presented together.

- 3.1 Reading
- 3.2 Writing
- 3.3 Speaking, listening and communicating

3.1 Reading

Learners will be required to engage with a range of straightforward texts on a range of topics. These will be of varying lengths that instruct, describe, explain or persuade.

At Level 2 learners will also need to engage with some complex texts.

Ref	Level 1
3.1.1	Identify and understand the main points, ideas and details in texts
3.1.2	Compare information, ideas and opinions in different texts
3.1.3	Identify meanings in texts and distinguish between fact and opinion
3.1.4	Recognise that language and other textual features can be varied to suit different audiences and purposes
3.1.5	Use reference materials and appropriate strategies (eg using knowledge of different word types) for a range of purposes, including to find the meaning of words
3.1.6	Understand organisational and structural features and use them to locate relevant information (eg index, menus, subheadings, paragraphs) in a range of straightforward texts
3.1.7	Infer from images meanings not explicit in the accompanying text
3.1.8	Recognise vocabulary typically associated with specific types and purposes of texts (eg formal, informal, instructional, descriptive, explanatory and persuasive)
3.1.9	Read and understand a range of specialist words in context
3.1.10	Use knowledge of punctuation to aid understanding of straightforward texts

Ref	Level 2
3.1.11	Identify the different situations when the main points are sufficient and when it is important to have specific details
3.1.12	Compare information, ideas and opinions in different texts, including how they are conveyed
3.1.13	Identify implicit and inferred meaning in texts
3.1.14	Understand the relationship between textual features and devices, and how they can be used to shape meaning for different audiences and purposes
3.1.15	Use a range of reference materials and appropriate resources (eg glossaries, legends/keys) for different purposes, including to find the meanings of words in straightforward and complex sources
3.1.16	Understand organisational features and use them to locate relevant information in a range of straightforward and complex sources
3.1.17	Analyse texts, of different levels of complexity, recognising their use of vocabulary and identifying levels of formality and bias
3.1.18	Follow an argument, identifying different points of view and distinguishing fact from opinion
3.1.19	Identify different styles of writing and writer's voice

3.2 Writing

At Level 1 learners will be required to produce straightforward texts such as narratives, instructions, explanations and reports of varying lengths.

At Level 2 learners will be required to produce straightforward and complex texts such as articles, narratives, explanations and reports of varying lengths.

Spelling, punctuation and grammar

Ref	Level 1 – Spelling, punctuation and grammar
3.2.1	Use a range of punctuation correctly (eg full stops, question marks, exclamation marks, commas, possessive apostrophes)
3.2.2	Use correct grammar (eg subject-verb agreement, consistent use of different tenses, definite and indefinite articles)
3.2.3	Spell words used most often in work, study and daily life, including specialist words

Ref	Level 2 – Spelling, punctuation and grammar
3.2.4	Punctuate writing correctly using a wide range of punctuation markers (eg colons, commas, inverted commas, apostrophes and quotation marks)
3.2.5	Use correct grammar (eg subject-verb agreement, consistent use of a range of tenses, definite and indefinite articles) and modality devices (eg to express probability or desirability)
3.2.6	Spell words used in work, study and daily life, including a range of specialist words

Writing composition

Ref	Level 1 – Writing composition
3.2.7	Communicate information, ideas and opinions clearly, coherently and accurately
3.2.8	Write text of an appropriate level of detail and of appropriate length (including where this is specified) to meet the needs of purpose and audience
3.2.9	Use format, structure and language appropriate for audience and purpose
3.2.10	Write consistently and accurately in complex sentences, using paragraphs where appropriate

Ref	Level 2 – Writing composition
3.2.11	Communicate information, ideas and opinions clearly, coherently and effectively
3.2.12	Write text of an appropriate level of detail and of appropriate length (including where this is specified) to meet the needs of purpose and audience
3.2.13	Organise writing for different purposes using appropriate format and structure (eg standard templates, paragraphs, bullet points, tables)
3.2.14	Convey clear meaning and establish cohesion using organisational markers effectively
3.2.15	Use different language and register (eg persuasive techniques, supporting evidence, specialist words), suited to audience and purpose
3.2.16	Construct complex sentences consistently and accurately, using paragraphs where appropriate

3.3 Speaking, listening and communicating

At Level 1 learners will need to complete tasks that require them to either respond to or produce narratives, explanations, discussions, instructions, information, descriptions and presentations all of varying lengths.

At Level 2 learners will need to complete tasks that require them to either respond to or produce extended narratives and information (information may be on technical, concrete or abstract topics), discussions, detailed explanations and presentations, all of varying lengths.

Ref	Level 1
3.3.1	Identify relevant information and lines of argument in explanations or presentations
3.3.2	Make requests and ask relevant questions to obtain specific information in different contexts
3.3.3	Respond effectively to detailed questions
3.3.4	Communicate information, ideas and opinions clearly and accurately on a range of topics
3.3.5	Express opinions and arguments and support them with evidence
3.3.6	Follow and understand discussions and make contributions relevant to the situation and the subject
3.3.7	Use appropriate phrases, registers and adapt contributions to take account of audience, purpose and medium
3.3.8	Respect the turn-taking rights of others during discussions, using appropriate language for interjection

Ref	Level 2
3.3.9	Identify relevant information from extended explanations or presentations
3.3.10	Follow narratives and lines of argument
3.3.11	Respond effectively to detailed or extended questions and feedback
3.3.12	Make requests and ask detailed and pertinent questions to obtain specific information in a range of contexts
3.3.13	Communicate information, ideas and opinions clearly and effectively, providing further detail and development if required
3.3.14	Express opinions and arguments and support them with relevant and persuasive evidence
3.3.15	Use language that is effective, accurate and appropriate to context and situation
3.3.16	Make relevant and constructive contributions to move discussion forward
3.3.17	Adapt contributions to discussions to suit audience, purpose and medium
3.3.18	Interject and redirect discussion using appropriate language and register

4 Scheme of assessment

Find past papers and mark schemes, and specimen papers for new courses, on our website at aqa.org.uk/pastpapers

AQA Level 1 and 2 Functional Skills in English assessments and certifications, for this specification, are available for the first time in January 2020 and then every February/March, May/June, November and January for the life of the specification. All Reading and Writing assessments are paper based assessments.

This is a modular qualification. In order to achieve the award, learners can complete all three assessments in the same or different exam sittings. They can also carry forward component results at the same level from any awarding organisation. Learners must pass all three assessments in their chosen level to gain an award, learners cannot sit a mixture of Level 1 and 2 assessments and gain a Level 1 or 2 award.

All materials are available in English only.

4.1 Aims and learning outcomes

Functional Skills English qualifications at Level 1 and 2 are qualifications for work, study and life. Achievement of the qualification demonstrates the ability at an appropriate level to read, write, speak, listen and communicate in English, and to apply these skills effectively to a range of purposes in the workplace and in other real life situations.

Functional Skills English qualifications at Level 1 and 2 indicate that learners should be able to speak, listen, communicate, read and write clearly, accurately, confidently and with effectiveness. They should be able to:

- listen, understand and make relevant contributions to discussions with others in a range of contexts;
- apply their understanding of language to adapt delivery and content to suit audience and purpose;
- read a range of different text types confidently and fluently, applying their knowledge and understanding of texts to their own writing;
- write texts of varying complexity, with accuracy, effectiveness, and correct spelling, punctuation and grammar; and
- understand the situations when, and audiences for which, planning, drafting and using formal language are important, and when they are less important.

Learners should be able to use these functional skills autonomously, applying them to a range of formal and informal contexts, in the workplace and in real life.

A key aspect of developing knowledge and skills in English, at Level 1 and Level 2, is to be able to communicate with confidence, effectiveness and with an increasing level of independence.

4.2 Assessment weightings

Each of the three assessment components carries a 33.3% weighting.

4.3 Guided learning hours

Guided Learning Hours (GLH) are defined (within the Education and Skills Act 2008) as the time a person spends:

- being taught or given instruction by a lecturer, tutor, supervisor or other appropriate provider of education or training
- otherwise participating in education and training under the immediate guidance or supervision of such a person.

It doesn't include time spent on unsupervised preparation or study, whether at home or otherwise.

The guided learning hours for this qualification is 55 hours.

4.4 Total qualification time

Total Qualification Time (TQT) is the total number of hours assigned to a qualification – combining the GLH, assessment time and Directed Study Hours (DST).

DST is defined as the activity of a learner in preparation, study or any other form of participation in the qualification subject, which takes place as directed – but not supervised – by a teacher, tutor or other appropriate provider.

The anticipated TQT for this qualification is 55 hours.

5 Non-exam assessment administration

The preparation and assessment of Speaking, listening and communicating is a compulsory requirement of the course of study. Teachers award either 'pass' or 'fail'.

Performance will be assessed against the following common criteria issued by all exam boards. The criteria should be used alongside the requirements listed in the scope of study for Speaking, listening and communicating detailed in section 3.3.

A *Candidate Record Form* (CRF) will need to be completed for each learner. You will use this form to document the learners achievements across the scope of study using the following pass criteria to assign an outcome of Pass or Fail.

Criteria for a Pass

Learners generally demonstrate the requirements for the level:

- consistently,
- effectively, and
- to an appropriate degree for that level.

Overall performance across the range of requirements for the level is secure; any insufficient demonstration of any individual content statement is balanced by appropriate demonstration of that same content statement elsewhere.

5.1 Setting the tasks

Centres will need to set two tasks for the speaking, listening and communicating assessment. One task is a discussion and one task is a presentation for both Level 1 and 2. Both the discussion and presentation can be of varying lengths depending on the task set. Our suggestion for timings is 10 to 15 minutes for the discussion and 3 to 5 minutes for the presentation.

The following examples give guidance as to the types of task that will allow assessment of the relevant scopes of study.

The term **presentation** is used to mean an extended piece of talk from an individual. Such presentations are expected to show the learner's ability to talk freely about a topic without reading a fully prepared script, although accessing written notes is perfectly acceptable. In some cases, the presentation may be recorded for later use (vlog or podcast) and, again, not read from a script. The assessed presentation should be based on at least one element of narrative, explanation, discussion, instruction, information, description with the presenter responding to questions accessing other elements from this list.

At Level 2 the assessed presentation should be based on at least one element of extended narrative, detailed information (which may be on technical, concrete or abstract topics) and detailed explanations all of varying lengths, with the presenter responding to questions accessing other elements from this list.

Learners will be expected to respond effectively to detailed questions at Level 1. Questions at Level 2 should be challenging, requiring the learner to reflect on what they have said and provide more detail and/or explanation.

Learners should have the opportunity to participate as listeners to presentations from other learners. Learners are encouraged to ask questions in the presentations they participate in, with further questions, as required, asked by the teacher to ensure that the whole scope of study is assessed. The expected standard for a Pass is that the learner has generally demonstrated the requirements of the level listed in the scope of study.

The term **discussion** is used to mean the spoken exchange of information, ideas or opinions between two or more people. Participants will come across a range of language in stimulus material, whether through presentation or other form, and will need to use appropriate language in their contributions adapting register and phraseology to meet the needs of purpose and audience. They will need to listen to others but at the same time be prepared to make contributions which move the discussion forward.

It is expected that learners will take part in more than one discussion and more than one presentation in different contexts.

The following suggested activities for both Level 1 and 2 have been constructed to ensure full coverage of the scope of study descriptors.

Suggested activities, Level 1:

Activity

Presentations:

- 1 Presentation of prepared talk – narrative, explanatory, informational or descriptive. The presenter would use notes, but not read from a script and would deliver the presentation to a group (or sometimes to a single person, such as a teacher, where circumstances dictate). The speaker will answer questions on material presented.
 - a Eg narrative presentation on topic of travel followed by question and answer.
 - b Eg informative presentation on cooking a specific dish followed by question and answer.
 - c Group activity where a number of learners make separate presentations, such as the planning of a trip where one learner might deal with transport, another with food and refreshment, a third with locations of interest. A group discussion could follow.
- 2 Presentation of prepared talk – narrative, persuasive or otherwise delivered as a recorded item, podcast or vlog. The prepared podcast/vlog would not be read from a script but the learner would be able to use notes. The presentation would be viewed via mobile phone, tablet, PC or other device. The narrator/speaker must answer live questions on material presented after podcast or vlog is delivered.
 - a Eg explanatory vlog presentation on topic of gender equality in sport.
 - b Eg descriptive podcast on musical event.

Discussions:

- 1 Discussion: could be related to the subject matter of the above presentations or a free standing discussion introduced by a member of the group.
 - a Eg discussion about travel. In this case, samples of promotional literature might be available alongside newspaper articles, local promotions etc.
 - b Eg discussion about gender equality.

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- 2 A shorter chaired meeting where the source material is a YouTube vlog introduced by the chair (this could be one of the participants or a teacher), eg YouTube vlog on the topic of animal conservation.
 - 3 A more extended teacher introduced discussion. Teacher could present printed material or provide a verbal introduction to the topic, eg recycling plastic.

Suggested activities, Level 2:

Activity

Presentations:

- 1
 - a A presentation on a personal travel experience, including the detailed narration of a key event and an explanation of why this event is so memorable.
 - b An explanatory presentation about the impact of social media on young people. This would involve the identification of at least one specific form of social media and a detailed explanation of how it works and its possible effects on users.
 - c A group activity where a number of learners make separate presentations around the idea of self and identity. Depending on the composition of the group this could involve ideas of regionality, social class etc.
- 2 Presentation of prepared talk – narrative or otherwise broadcast as a recorded item, podcast or vlog. The presentation would be viewed via mobile phone, tablet, PC or other device. The prepared podcast/vlog would not be read from a script but the learner would be able to use notes. The narrator/speaker to answer live questions on material presented after podcast or vlog is broadcast.
 - a Eg explanatory vlog presentation on topic of impact of money in sport.
 - b A podcast on a topic of current interest, national or local, with explanation of the issues and a personal point of view.

Discussions:

- 1 Discussion: could be related to the subject matter of the above or a free standing discussion introduced by a member of the discussion group.
 - a A discussion on a topic of current interest, national or local, with group exploration of the issues involved and the presentation and interrogation of personal points of view.
 - b Eg discussion about money in sport, the roles of agents, the transfer market in football, the behaviour of players, the behaviour of supporters etc.
- 2 A shorter, chaired meeting where the source material is a YouTube vlog introduced by the chair (this could be one of the participants or a teacher), eg YouTube vlog on the topic of being vegetarian.
- 3 An extended teacher-introduced discussion, for example:
 - a lowering the voting age, making voting compulsory etc
 - b the environmental impact of the global clothing industry.

Avoiding malpractice

Please note we expect centres to monitor that learners are meeting AQA regulations concerning malpractice. Learners must not:

- submit work which is not their own
- make their work available to other learners through any medium
- allow other learners to have access to their own independently sourced material
- assist other learners to produce work
- use books, the Internet or other sources without acknowledgement or attribution
- submit work that has been word processed by a third party without acknowledgement
- include inappropriate, offensive or obscene material.

These actions constitute malpractice and a penalty will be given (for example, disqualification). With respect to this component:

- if it comes to light that a teacher has awarded a pass to a learner who has not in fact carried out the two tasks in the required manner, the head of centre will be asked to carry out an investigation of the circumstances and report to the awarding body. Results from some or all learners at the centre may be withheld
- because of the nature of the work required, opportunities for learner malpractice are lessened, but in circumstances where it occurs the standard published malpractice procedures apply.

5.2 Teacher standardisation

We will provide support for using the assessment criteria and developing appropriate tasks through teacher standardisation materials. These materials will set the standards for the lifetime of the specification.

Teacher standardisation is essential if your school or college is new to this specification. We will send you an invitation to complete teacher standardisation.

For further support and advice please contact us at english-gcse@aqa.org.uk

5.3 Internal standardisation

You must ensure that you have consistent assessment standards for all learners. One person must manage this process and they must sign the *Centre declaration sheet* to confirm that internal standardisation has taken place.

Internal standardisation may involve:

- all teachers assess some sample presentations/discussions to identify differences in applying the assessment criteria
- discussing any differences in application of the assessment criteria at a training meeting for all teachers involved
- referring to reference material, such as examples of presentations/discussions provided by the awarding bodies.

5.4 Submitting outcomes

The deadline for submitting the outcome for each learner is given at [aqa.org.uk/keydates](https://www.aqa.org.uk/keydates)

5.5 Centre visits

An AQA monitor will visit a third of centres entering the speaking, listening and communicating component each academic year. Therefore as a minimum each centre will be visited once every three years.

On this visit the monitor will need to:

- observe assessments being undertaken or review video evidence of learner performance
- observe assessment/standardisation being undertaken by assessors at that centre
- review the centre's processes and controls
- interview key centre staff with responsibility for the delivery.

The monitor will contact the centre to organise a visit at a convenient time for the centre. These visits will usually take place in the autumn term.

5.6 Monitoring

Each academic year you will be asked to provide audio-visual recordings of the presentations of a sample of learners by specified dates given at aqa.org.uk/deadlines. Alongside the recording you must supply information to enable the identification of the learner in their presentation. You will need to complete a *Candidate Record Form* for each learner which will include your given judgement of pass/fail. In order to be awarded a pass, a tick must be provided for each of the skills identified on the *Candidate Record Form* for both tasks. For the discussion task/s you will be required to supply additional written evidence of how the criteria were or were not met.

The sample is selected by the centre. A separate sample is required for each level. The recording of each learner's presentation, including questions and feedback from the audience, must be complete and unedited. Each sample must contain evidence for ten learners. If you make entries of less than ten learners you must submit recordings for each learner.

Centres are recommended to aim to record slightly more than the minimum number required.

A monitor appointed by AQA will view some or all of a centre's recordings.

5.7 After monitoring

We will not be providing feedback to centres after monitoring. If there are concerns as a result of monitoring, the centre will be contacted by AQA with an explanation of the concerns and provided with additional support through a centre visit by a monitor in the following academic year. In the future, this may lead to enhanced monitoring arrangements which may include an earlier deadline for submission of assessments or a requirement to record the presentations of all learners.

6 General administration

You can find information about all aspects of administration, as well as all the forms you need, at aqa.org.uk/examsadmin

6.1 Entries and codes

Every specification is given a national discount (classification) code by the Department for Education (DfE), which indicates its subject area.

If a learner takes two specifications with the same discount code, Further and Higher Education providers are likely to take the view that they have only achieved one of the two qualifications. Please check this before your learners start their course. Where two specifications have the same discount code, only one of them will be counted for the purpose of the *School and College Performance tables* – the DfE’s rules on ‘early entry’ will determine which one.

Qualification title	AQA entry code
AQA Functional Skills in English Level 1 Award	8721
AQA Functional Skills in English Level 2 Award	8726

You should use the following entry codes for the components:

- Component 1 Reading Level 1 – 8720R
- Component 1 Reading Level 2 – 8725R
- Component 2 Writing Level 1 – 8720W
- Component 2 Writing Level 2 – 8725W
- Component 3 Speaking, listening and communicating Level 1 – 8720S
- Component 3 Speaking, listening and communicating Level 2 – 8725S

Functional Skills English is a modular specification and is being offered in four entry series per year. It is not possible to make an entry for a student for the same component at both Level 1 and Level 2 in the same exam series.

Learners should be entered for the overall qualification award at or after the series in which they complete the three components.

This specification complies with Ofqual’s:

- *General Conditions of Recognition* that apply to all regulated qualifications
- Functional Skills qualification conditions that apply to all Functional Skills
- Functional Skills English conditions that apply to all Functional Skills in this subject.

The Ofqual qualification accreditation numbers (QAN) are 603/4284/5 (Level 1) and 603/4285/7 (Level 2).

6.2 Overlaps with other qualifications

There is some overlap between this specification and AQA’s GCSE English Language.

6.3 Awarding grades and reporting results

The AQA Level 1 and 2 Functional Skills qualifications will be graded on a pass/fail system. Learners who fail to reach the minimum standard will be recorded as 'Fail' (failed) and will not receive a qualification certificate.

We will publish the minimum raw mark for a pass, for each Reading and Writing paper, when we issue learners' results. We will report a learner's results to your centre in terms of overall outcome and marks for each paper.

6.4 Resits and shelf life

Learners can resit the qualification as many times as they wish, within the shelf life of the qualification.

Component results remain available to count towards certification within the shelf life of the specification.

6.5 Access to assessment: diversity and inclusion

General qualifications are designed to prepare learners for a wide range of occupations and further study. Therefore our qualifications must assess a wide range of competencies.

The subject criteria have been assessed to see if any of the skills or knowledge required present any possible difficulty to any learners, whatever their ethnic background, religion, sex, age, disability or sexuality. If any difficulties were encountered, the criteria were reviewed again to make sure that tests of specific competencies were only included if they were important to the subject.

As members of the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) we participate in the production of the JCQ document *Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments: General and Vocational qualifications*. We follow these guidelines when assessing the needs of individual learners who may require an access arrangement or reasonable adjustment. This document is published on the JCQ website at jcq.org.uk

Learners with disabilities and special needs

We can make arrangements for disabled learners and learners with special needs to help them access the assessments, as long as the competencies being tested are not changed. Access arrangements must be agreed **before** the assessment. For example, a Braille paper would be a reasonable adjustment for a Braille reader but not for a learner who does not read Braille. Sign language (ie BSL, SSE) is permissible in the Speaking, Listening and Communicating component, provided this is made accessible to all participants in the discussion. (It is recognised that BSL is a language in its own right and not a form of English. BSL is, however, permitted as an alternative to English for the assessment of Speaking, Listening and Communicating where BSL is the learner's normal way of communicating in the contexts described by the scope of study.) No other languages are permitted as alternatives to English.

Similarly, access to augmentative speech equipment is permissible where it reflects the learner's normal way of working.

We are required by the Equality Act 2010 to make reasonable adjustments to remove or lessen any disadvantage that affects a disabled learner.

If you have learners who need access arrangements or reasonable adjustments, you can apply by emailing accessarrangementsqueries@aqa.org.uk

Special consideration

We can give special consideration to learners who have been disadvantaged at the time of the exam through no fault of their own – for example a temporary illness, injury or serious problem such as the death of a relative. We can only do this **after** the exam.

Your exams officer should apply online for special consideration at [aqa.org.uk/eaqa](https://www.aqa.org.uk/eaqa)

For more information and advice about special consideration please see [aqa.org.uk/access](https://www.aqa.org.uk/access) or email specialconsiderationqueries@aca.org.uk

6.6 Working with AQA for the first time

If your school or college has not previously offered any AQA specification, you need to register as an AQA centre to offer our exams to your learners. Find out how at [aqa.org.uk/becomeacentre](https://www.aqa.org.uk/becomeacentre)

If your school or college is new to this specification, please let us know by completing an Intention to enter form. The easiest way to do this is via e-AQA at [aqa.org.uk/eaqa](https://www.aqa.org.uk/eaqa)

6.7 Private candidates

A private candidate is someone who enters for exams through an AQA-approved school or college but is not enrolled as a learner there.

If you are a private candidate you may be self-taught, home-schooled or have private tuition, either with a tutor or through a distance learning organisation. You must be based in the UK. You must ensure that the centre are willing to undertake and assess the Speaking, listening and communicating component.

If you have any queries as a private candidate, you can:

- speak to the exams officer at the school or college where you intend to take your exams
- visit our website at [aqa.org.uk/examsadmin](https://www.aqa.org.uk/examsadmin)
- email: privatecandidates@aca.org.uk

Get help and support

Visit our website for information, guidance, support and resources at:

[aqa.org.uk/subjects/english](https://www.aqa.org.uk/subjects/english)

You can talk directly to the English subject team

E: english-gcse@aca.org.uk

T: 0161 953 7504