

Qualification Specification

**NCFE Level 1 Functional Skills Qualification in
English**

QN: 603/5058/1

**NCFE Level 2 Functional Skills Qualification in
English**

QN: 603/5054/4

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Qualification summary

Qualification title	Level 1 Functional Skills Qualification in English Level 2 Functional Skills Qualification in English
Qualification number (QN)	603/5058/1 603/5054/4
Aim reference	60350581 60350544
Total Qualification Time (TQT)	66
Guided Learning Hours (GLH)	55
Minimum age	There is no minimum age requirement for registration.
Qualification purpose	<p>From the Department for Education's Functional Skills English Subject Content:</p> <p>A key aim for Functional Skills English specifications is that they should enable the learner to develop confidence and fluency in, and a positive attitude towards, English. Learners should be able to demonstrate their competence in English by using it in real-world situations, as well as demonstrating a sound grasp of basic English knowledge and skills.</p> <p>The purpose of Functional Skills English Level 1 and Level 2 qualifications is to prepare 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.</p>

<p>Aims and objectives</p>	<p>From the Department for Education’s Functional Skills English Subject Content:</p> <p>Functional Skills English qualifications at these levels indicate that learners should be able to speak, listen, communicate, read and write clearly, accurately, confidently, and with effectiveness. They should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 • understand the situations when, and audiences for which, planning, drafting and using formal language are important, and when they are less important <p>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.</p> <p>A key aspect of developing knowledge and skills in English, at level 1 and 2, is to be able to communicate with confidence, effectiveness and with an increasing level of independence.</p>
<p>Grading</p>	<p>Pass/Fail</p>
<p>Resits</p>	<p>Resits are available. It is recommended that resits are booked no earlier than 2 weeks following the receipt of results, to allow for further teaching and learning to take place.</p>
<p>Assessment method</p>	<p>These qualifications are each assessed via two external assessments and one controlled assessment.</p> <p>The external assessments cover:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading • Writing <p>The external assessments are task-based and invigilated. Once the completed assessments are returned to NCFE, they are marked by NCFE examiners.</p> <p>The internal assessment covers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speaking, Listening and Communicating <p>The controlled assessments take place in a controlled environment. They are internally assessed, internally quality assured and externally quality assured.</p> <p>Controlled and external assessment tasks use a unique theme. Each theme is carefully selected so that the tasks are realistic and relatable to everyday contexts.</p>

Staffing requirements	Controlled assessments do not require additional staffing requirements. Please refer to the NCFE Support Handbook for generic staffing requirements.
NCFE support	<p>Support with Functional Skills delivery includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sample papers and exemplar materials • automated feedback for Reading and Writing assessments • opportunity to access NCFE Skills Assessment initial and diagnostic assessment tools • Provider Development webinars and events, in which advice and guidance is provided to assist with the delivery of Functional Skills
Progression	<p>Learners who achieve Functional Skills English at Level 1 could progress to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NCFE Level 2 Functional Skills Qualification in English (603/5054/4) • NCFE Level 2 Certificate in Essential English in Everyday Life (610/0676/2)
Regulation information	These are regulated qualifications. The regulated numbers for these qualifications are 603/5058/1 and 603/5054/4.
Funding	These qualifications may be eligible for funding. You can find out if any NCFE qualification is eligible for funding from the Department for Education (DfE).

Section 1: about these qualifications

This Qualification Specification contains details of all the components and assessments required to complete these qualifications.

To ensure that you are using the most up-to-date version of this Qualification Specification, please check the version number and date in the footer against that of the Qualification Specification on the NCFE website.

If you advertise these qualifications using a different or shortened name, you must ensure that learners are aware that their final certificate will state the full regulated qualification title.

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The resources and materials used in the delivery of these qualifications must be age-appropriate and due consideration should be given to the wellbeing and safeguarding of learners in line with your institute's safeguarding policy when developing or selecting delivery materials.

Support Handbook

This Qualification Specification must be used alongside the mandatory Support Handbook which can be found on the NCFE website. This contains additional supporting information to help with planning, delivery and assessment.

This Qualification Specification contains all the qualification-specific information you will need that is not covered in the Support Handbook.

Direct Claim Status (DCS)

These qualifications are eligible for DCS.

For more information, including DCS criteria and how to meet the required quality standards, please visit the NCFE website.

Entry guidance

These qualifications are designed for learners who want to improve their everyday English abilities in preparation for life and work. These qualifications may also be studied by learners as part of their vocational apprenticeship.

There are no specific recommended prior learning requirements for these qualifications.

Registration is at the discretion of the centre, in accordance with equality legislation, and should be made on the Portal.

Centres are responsible for ensuring that these qualifications are appropriate for the age and ability of learners.

Skills Assessment initial and diagnostic assessments will assist in determining what level a learner is working to. Each learner will then receive an individual skills plan to help progress to that level. NCFE recommends delivering a Skills Assessment initial and diagnostic assessment to learners prior to registration.

Learners registered on these qualifications should not undertake another qualification at the same level with the same or a similar title, as duplication of learning may affect funding eligibility.

Achieving these qualifications

Functional Skills English qualifications at levels 1 and 2 are comprised of 3 mandatory components per level:

- **Speaking, Listening and Communicating** – internally assessed
- **Reading** – externally assessed
- **Writing** – externally assessed

The order in which a learner attempts the component assessments is at the centre's discretion.

For a learner to achieve the qualification and be awarded their certificate, they must obtain a Pass grade in the assessment for each component.

Mixing component levels

In accordance with Ofqual's Functional Skills English Conditions and Requirements all components must be attempted at the same level. This means there can be no variations of levels for individual learners.

Transfer of achievement

Transfer of achievement is where a learner has completed an English component with another awarding organisation but is no longer able to achieve the overall Functional Skills English qualification with that awarding organisation and has since been registered to an NCFE Functional Skills qualification.

Transfer of achievement is permitted for the 2019 reformed Functional Skills qualifications, subject to receipt of the appropriate evidence. It is not permitted between legacy Functional Skills and the 2019 reformed Functional Skills.

Following successful transfer of achievement, that learner would not be required to resit the assessment for a component they have already completed.

Further details on the transfer of achievement process (and the transfer of achievement application form) can be found on the NCFE website.

How the qualifications are assessed

These qualifications are assessed internally or externally, depending on the component.

Controlled assessments are designed and provided by NCFE and delivered to the learner under controlled assessment conditions. The completed controlled assessment is marked by the assessor.

Internal assessments are subject to quality control measures.

Unless stated otherwise in this Qualification Specification, all learners taking this qualification must be assessed in English and all assessment evidence presented for external quality assurance must be in English.

External assessment

The following components are externally assessed:

- **Reading**
- **Writing**

The external assessments are comprised of a short-answer question paper, set and marked by NCFE. The assessment assesses learners' knowledge, understanding and skills based on the subject content of these qualifications.

Centres must not assess or internally quality assure external assessments or provide any feedback to the learner about their performance in the external assessment. NCFE has multiple feedback options that are available post results release.

The external assessments are administered under specified assessment conditions, and last for the following durations:

	Level 1	Level 2
Reading	60 minutes	60 minutes
Writing	70 minutes	70 minutes

The external assessment hours must be delivered in accordance with the Regulations for the Conduct of External Assessments. There will be specific tasks that learners must complete within this time.

For guidance on conducting external assessments, please refer to our Regulations for the Conduct of External Assessments, available on the NCFE website.

On-demand assessment

Centres can choose the date, time and location of assessments. The assessments for these qualifications are available through our online assessment platform.

Onscreen assessment

Prior to delivering onscreen assessments, centres must complete the registration form available on the NCFE website.

Assessments are completed via the online assessment platform, which must be downloaded to the device prior to beginning the assessment.

Prior to attempting the external assessment on a device, **it is essential that the centre ensures that the device meets the technical specifications** as specified in the Technical Specification document available on the NCFE website.

Assessments are scheduled using the online assessment platform. Once the assessment has been scheduled a keycode will be provided, once that keycode is entered into the platform, the assessment will begin.

Assessments can also be downloaded for sitting on an offline device, either by downloading the assessment to a device which will be offline at the time of the assessment, or by downloading the assessment to a USB stick which will later be plugged into an offline device.

For more information about onscreen assessment, visit the NCFE website.

Paper-based assessment

Entries must be submitted via the Portal six working days before the date of assessment.

For details of fees, please refer to the current Fees and Pricing Guide available on the NCFE website.

Centres must return all external assessment material and learner work to NCFE two working days after the external assessment has taken place by Royal Mail Special Delivery or comparable service from other providers (we would not consider Royal Mail Recorded Delivery to be an acceptable method of delivery, as this does not guarantee a tracking facility throughout the entire delivery process).

Functional Skills Live Bank

At the time of scheduling an assessment, NCFE allocates a Functional Skills assessment from a live bank of different question papers. These question papers each have their own unique theme and topic and remain comparable to one another through rigorous quality assurance processes.

If a resit is required a learner will be allocated a different assessment from the live bank.

Results

For paper-based assessments:

- past the initial awarding period, results are issued six working days after the date of the assessment's successful return to NCFE.

For onscreen assessments:

- past the initial awarding period, results are issued six working days after the date of the assessment's successful upload to NCFE's onscreen assessment system

If external assessment paperwork is not completed accurately by the centre, this may lengthen the time required to issue a result.

Enquiries about results

If a result is not interpreted as a valid reflection of a learner's ability, an enquiry about a result can be submitted in line with our Enquiries and Appeals about Results and Assessment Decisions Policy, which is available on the NCFE website.

To ensure the integrity of assessments within the live bank, **completed assessment papers cannot be returned**. A selection of retired assessments will be made publicly available as sample papers.

Speaking, Listening and Communicating

This component is internally assessed.

Each learner is required to undertake **one** assessment for this component. A Learner Observation and Assessment Record (LOAR) form must be completed for each learner. Exemplar completed LOAR forms are available on the NCFE website.

Guidance for centres on the delivery of Speaking, Listening and Communicating can be found on the NCFE website. Centres must comply with the information provided in the guidance document. Centres may use or adapt exemplar tasks provided in the guidance or create their own, but they must not alter the overall level of demand.

The assessment is internally assessed and subject to quality control measures. Each assessment consists of **two** tasks:

	Task	Level 1	Level 2
Speaking, Listening and Communicating	1. Short talk or presentation with a question and answer session	10 to 15 minutes	10 to 15 minutes
	2. Group discussion	10 to 15 minutes	10 to 15 minutes

Individual Speaking, Listening and Communicating tasks can occur over separate sittings. If the learner fails one of the tasks, they can retake that task.

Section 2: subject content and assessment guidance

This section provides details of the structure and content of these qualifications.

The Functional Skills subject content is provided by the DfE, who stipulate that awarding organisations must create Functional Skills qualifications that rigidly adhere to this content.

The English subject content can be accessed from the DfE directly, from their Functional Skills subject content: English [webpage](#). The official documents also contain a glossary of terms and some additional information regarding the subject content.

Referencing for the subject content uses the following coding:

L1	Level 1
L2	Level 2
1	Speaking, Listening and Communicating
2	Reading
3	Writing

For assessment delivery instructions and guidance, please refer to the Qualification Specific Instructions for Delivery (QSID) and the Regulations for the Conduct of External Assessments on the NCFE website.

English Level 1 subject content and assessment

Level 1 Speaking, Listening and Communicating

Learners must be taught Speaking, Listening and Communicating using a variety of texts. This should include narratives, information, instructions, explanations, discussions, descriptions and presentations.

Learners must meet the requirements of each subject content statement in line with the Pass level descriptor.

Pass level descriptor

Learners generally demonstrate the requirements for the level:

- consistently
- effectively
- 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.

Reference	Subject content statement	Assessment weighting
L1.1.1	Identify relevant information and lines of argument in explanations or presentations	Each subject content statement is equally weighted across the entire assessment (some statements may apply to only one task).
L1.1.2	Make requests and ask relevant questions to obtain specific information in different contexts	
L1.1.3	Respond effectively to detailed questions	
L1.1.4	Communicate information, ideas and opinions clearly and accurately on a range of topics	
L1.1.5	Express opinions and arguments and support them with evidence	
L1.1.6	Follow and understand discussions and make contributions relevant to the situation and the subject	
L1.1.7	Use appropriate phrases, registers and adapt contributions to take account of audience, purpose and medium	
L1.1.8	Respect the turn-taking rights of others during discussions, using appropriate language for interjections	

The Learner Observation and Assessment Record (LOAR) form details the subject content statements addressed by each task.

Level 1 Speaking, Listening and Communicating assessment

Task	Task content	Duration
1	<p>Short talk and question and answer session, with a minimum of three learners</p> <p>The learner will prepare and deliver a short talk to an audience, then invite questions immediately afterwards. The audience may not ask questions during the short talk. The short talk is a step towards the more formal presentation assessed at Level 2. Assessors may either choose an NCFE exemplar topic, set an overarching topic that learners can personalise, or learners can choose their own topic. If the learner chooses the topic, the assessor must ensure this is fit for purpose, suitable for the question and answer session and enables the learner to meet all relevant criteria.</p> <p>The question and answer session will provide the learner with a further opportunity to adapt spoken language for different purposes. If required, the assessor may ask further questions to allow the learner an opportunity to meet all relevant subject content statements.</p>	10 to 15 minutes
2	<p>Group discussion</p> <p>A group consisting of a minimum of three learners is instructed to discuss a topic designed to elicit discussion. Participants must be made aware of the topic in advance so they can carry out research, if required. Where possible, learners should choose topics that interest them.</p> <p>In order to facilitate the assessment, the assessor can act as chair or, if appropriate within the group dynamic, a learner may volunteer for the role.</p>	10 to 15 minutes

There are no numerical marks awarded for Speaking, Listening and Communicating assessments. Assessors must use the LOAR form to assign an outcome of Pass or Fail. To obtain a Pass, the learner is required to sufficiently evidence their ability to meet each scope of study in line with the Pass level grade descriptor.

Level 1 Reading

Learners must be taught using a variety of texts. This should include a range of straightforward texts on a range of topics and of varying lengths that instruct, describe, explain and persuade.

Reference	Subject content statement	Assessment weighting (approx.)
L1.2.9	Identify and understand the main points, ideas and details in texts	23.33%
L1.2.10	Compare information, ideas and opinions in different texts	10.00%
L1.2.11	Identify meanings in texts and distinguish between fact and opinion	13.33%
L1.2.12	Recognise that language and other textual features can be varied to suit different audiences and purposes	10.00%
L1.2.13	Use reference materials and appropriate strategies (for example, using knowledge of different word types) for a range of purposes, including to find the meaning of words	6.67%
L1.2.14	Understand organisational and structural features and use them to locate relevant information (for example, index, menus, subheadings, paragraphs)	10.00%
L1.2.15	Infer from images meanings not explicit in the accompanying text	6.67%
L1.2.16	Recognise vocabulary typically associated with specific types and purposes of texts (for example, formal, informal, instructional, descriptive, explanatory, persuasive)	10.00%
L1.2.17	Read and understand a range of specialist words in context	6.67%
L1.2.18	Use their knowledge of punctuation to aid understanding of straightforward texts	3.33%

For L1.2.12, learners should become familiar with language features such as:

- adjectives
- direct address
- emotive language
- exaggeration
- rhetorical questions
- rule of three
- similes
- statistics

For L1 2.14, learners should become familiar with organisational features, for example:

- bullet points
- captions
- diagrams/charts

- footnotes
- headings/titles
- numbered lists
- subheadings
- tables
- text presented in special display boxes/text boxes

Level 1 Reading assessment

Activity	Activity content	Marks	Duration
1	Reading task The learner is tasked with reading one contextualised source document. To gain marks the learner is required to answer a mixture of multiple-choice, objective-test questions and short-answer questions based on the document contents. Comparison questions may form part of the section.	13 to 15	60 minutes
2	Reading task The learner is tasked with reading one contextualised source document. To gain marks the learner is required to answer a mixture of multiple-choice and short-answer questions based on the document contents. Comparison questions form part of the section.	15 to 17	
		30	

Level 1 Writing

Learners must be taught using a variety of texts. This should include straightforward texts of varying lengths such as narratives, instructions, explanations and reports of varying lengths.

Reference	Subject content statement – Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar	Assessment weighting (approx.)
L1.3.19	Use a range of punctuation correctly (for example, full stops, question marks, exclamation marks, commas, possessive apostrophes)	15.00%
L1.3.20	Use correct grammar (for example, subject-verb agreement, consistent use of different tenses, definite and indefinite articles)	15.00%
L1.3.21	Spell words used most often in work, study and daily life, including specialist words	15.00%

Reference	Subject content statement – Composition	Assessment weighting (approx.)
L1.3.22	Communicate information, ideas and opinions clearly, coherently and accurately	15.00%
L1.3.23	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	10.00%
L1.3.24	Use format, structure and language appropriate for audience and purpose	20.00%
L1.3.25	Write consistently and accurately in complex sentences, using paragraphs where appropriate	10.00%

Level 1 Writing assessment

Activity	Activity content	Marks – composition	Marks – SPaG	Overall total	Duration
1	Writing composition: the learner is tasked with completing a writing activity, based on a contextualised scenario.	11	9	40	70 minutes
2	Writing composition: the learner is tasked with completing a writing activity, based on contextualised scenarios.	11	9		
		Total 22	Total 18		

Each writing activity requires the learner to provide a response tailored to a specific type of document, as directed by the task instructions.

In preparation for completing the writing activities, learners should become familiar with the following writing features:

- format
- language
- purpose
- audience
- structure

Further details on those features are in the tables below.

Format	
Document types	Characteristics
	Characteristics listed in bold are vital to the associated document type (for example, an email requires an appropriate email address).
Formal letter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sender's postal address • recipient's address • date • salutation and matching close
Article	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • heading • subheadings • bullet points • author's name

Format	
Document types	Characteristics
	Characteristics listed in bold are vital to the associated document type (for example, an email requires an appropriate email address).
Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • heading • subheadings • bullet points • author's name
Email	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • appropriate email address and subject line • salutation and matching close
Leaflet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • heading • subheadings • bullet points • numbering
Formal report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • heading • subheadings • bullet points • numbering • author's name
Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • formal • informal
Purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • persuasive • descriptive • explanatory • instructional
Audience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • workplace • familiar real-life situations
Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • beginning • middle • end

Learners **must not** have access to an external aid in relation to spelling, punctuation and grammar when taking an assessment for the Writing component. Such external aids include dictionaries and spelling and grammar checking software.

English Level 2 subject content and assessment

Level 2 Speaking, Listening and Communicating

Learners must be taught Speaking, Listening and Communicating using a variety of texts. This should include extended examples of varying lengths, such as information (which may be on technical, concrete or abstract topics), detailed explanations and presentations.

Learners must meet the requirements of each subject content statement in line with the Pass level descriptor.

Pass level descriptor

Learners generally demonstrate the requirements for the level:

- consistently
- effectively
- 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.

This should include extended narratives and information (information may be on technical, concrete or abstract topics), discussions, detailed explanations and presentations, all of varying lengths.

Reference	Subject content statement	Assessment weighting
L2.1.1	Identify relevant information from extended explanations or presentations	Each subject content statement is equally weighted across the entire assessment (some statements may apply to only one task).
L2.1.2	Follow narratives and lines of argument	
L2.1.3	Respond effectively to detailed or extended questions and feedback	
L2.1.4	Make requests and ask detailed and pertinent questions to obtain specific information in a range of contexts	
L2.1.5	Communicate information, ideas and opinions clearly and effectively, providing further detail and development if required	
L2.1.6	Express opinions and arguments and support them with relevant and persuasive evidence	
L2.1.7	Use language that is effective, accurate and appropriate to context and situation	
L2.1.8	Make relevant and constructive contributions to move discussion forward	
L2.1.9	Adapt their contributions to discussions to suit audience, purpose and medium	

Reference	Subject content statement	Assessment weighting
L2.1.10	Interject and redirect a discussion using appropriate language and register	

The LOAR form details the subject content statements addressed by each task.

Level 2 Speaking, Listening and Communicating assessment

Task	Task content	Duration
1	<p>Presentation and question and answer session, with a minimum of three learners</p> <p>The learner will prepare and deliver a presentation to an audience, then invite questions immediately afterwards. The audience may not ask questions during the presentation. Assessors may either choose an NCFE exemplar topic, set an overarching topic that learners can personalise, or learners can choose their own topic. If the learner chooses the topic, the assessor must ensure this is fit for purpose; the presentation should demonstrate the learner's ability to adapt verbal contributions to suit the audience, purpose and medium.</p> <p>The question and answer session will provide the learner with a further opportunity to adapt contributions and use language effectively, accurately and appropriately. If required, the assessor may ask further questions to allow the learner an opportunity to meet all relevant subject content statements.</p>	10 to 15 minutes
2	<p>Group discussion</p> <p>A group consisting of a minimum of three learners is instructed to discuss a topic designed to elicit discussion. Participants must be made aware of the topic in advance so they can carry out research.</p> <p>In order to facilitate the assessment, the assessor can act as chair or, if appropriate within the group dynamic, a learner may volunteer for the role.</p>	10 to 15 minutes

There are no numerical marks awarded for Speaking, Listening and Communicating assessments. Assessors must use the LOAR form to assign an outcome of Pass or Fail. To obtain a Pass, the learner is required to sufficiently evidence their ability to meet each scope of study in line with the Pass level grade descriptor.

Level 2 Reading

Learners must be taught using a variety of texts. This should include a range of straightforward and complex texts on a range of topics and of varying lengths that instruct, describe, explain and persuade.

Reference	Subject content statement	Assessment weighting (approx.)
L2.2.11	Identify the different contexts when the main points are sufficient and when it is important to have specific details	10.00%
L2.2.12	Compare information, ideas and opinions in different texts, including how they are conveyed	10.00%
L2.2.13	Identify implicit and inferred meaning	13.33%
L2.2.14	Understand the relationship between textual features and devices, and how they can be used to shape meaning for different audiences and purposes	13.33%
L2.2.15	Use a range of reference materials and appropriate resources (for example, glossaries, legends or keys) for different purposes, including to find the meanings of words in straightforward and complex sources	6.67%
L2.2.16	Understand organisational features and use them to locate relevant information in a range of straightforward and complex sources	10.00%
L2.2.17	Analyse texts of different levels of complexity, recognising their use of vocabulary and identifying levels of formality and bias	13.33%
L2.2.18	Follow an argument, identifying different points of view and distinguishing fact from opinion	13.33%
L2.2.19	Identify different styles of writing and writer's voice	10.00%

For L2.2.14, learners should become familiar with language features, for example:

- alliteration
- imperative
- humour
- hyperbole/exaggeration
- metaphor
- repetition
- rule of three
- short sentences (five words or fewer)
- simile
- slang
- statistics
- rhetorical questions

For L2.2.16, learners should become familiar with organisational features such as:

- bullet point
- captions
- diagrams/charts
- footnotes
- headings/titles
- numbered lists
- navigation bar
- sections
- subheadings
- tables
- text presented in special display boxes/text boxes

For L2.2.19, learners should become familiar with tones of voice and styles of writing, for example:

- tones of voice:
 - negative/disheartened
 - optimistic/enthusiastic
 - conversational/chatty
 - professional/polite
 - objective
 - biased
 - supportive
 - annoyed/critical
 - sarcastic
 - sincere
 - light-hearted/playful
 - serious
- styles of writing:
 - descriptive
 - instructional
 - humorous
 - informal
 - informative
 - formal
 - persuasive
 - technical

Level 2 Reading assessment

Activity	Activity contents	Marks	Duration
1	Reading component The learner is tasked with reading one contextualised source document. To gain marks the learner is required to answer a mixture of multiple-choice, objective-test questions and short-answer questions based on the document contents. Comparison and analysis may form part of the section.	6 to 13	60 minutes
2	Reading component The learner is tasked with reading one contextualised source document. To gain marks the learner is required to answer a mixture of multiple-choice, objective-test questions and short-answer questions based on the document contents. Comparison and analysis form part of the section.	6 to 13	
3	Reading component The learner is tasked with reading one contextualised source document. To gain marks the learner is required to answer a mixture of multiple-choice, objective-test questions and short-answer questions based on the document contents. Comparison and analysis form part of the section.	6 to 13	
		30	

Level 2 Writing

Learners must be taught using a variety of texts. This should include straightforward and complex texts such as articles, narratives, explanations and reports of varying lengths.

Reference	Subject content statement – Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar	Assessment weighting (approx.)
L2.3.20	Punctuate correctly, using a wide range of punctuation markers (for example, colons, commas, inverted commas, apostrophes and quotation marks)	13.64%
L2.3.21	Use correct grammar (for example, subject-verb agreement, consistent use of a range of tenses, definite and indefinite articles) and modality devices (for example, to express probability or desirability)	13.64%
L2.3.22	Spell words used in work, study and daily life, including a range of specialist words	13.64%

Reference	Subject content statement – Composition	Assessment weighting (approx.)
L2.3.23	Communicate information, ideas and opinions clearly, coherently and effectively	13.64%
L2.3.24	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	9.09%
L2.3.25	Organise writing for different purposes using the appropriate format and structure (for example, standard templates, paragraphs, bullet points, tables)	13.64%
L2.3.26	Convey clear meaning and establish cohesion using organisational markers effectively	4.55%
L2.3.27	Use different language and register (for example, persuasive techniques, supporting evidence, specialist words) suited to the audience and purpose	9.09%
L2.3.28	Construct complex sentences consistently and accurately, using paragraphs where appropriate	9.09%

Level 2 Writing assessment

Activity	Activity content	Marks – composition	Marks – SPaG	Overall total	Duration
1	Writing composition: the learner is tasked with completing a writing activity, based on a contextualised scenario.	13	9	44	70 minutes
2	Writing composition: the learner is tasked with completing a writing activity, based on contextualised scenarios.	13	9		
		Total 26	Total 18		

Each writing activity requires the learner to provide a response tailored to a specific type of document, as directed by the task instructions.

In preparation for completing the writing activities, learners should become familiar with the following writing features:

- format
- language
- purpose
- audience
- structure

Further details on those features are in the tables below.

Format	
Document types	Characteristics
	Characteristics listed in bold are vital to the associated document type (for example, an email requires an appropriate email address).
Formal letter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sender's postal address • recipient's address • date • salutation and matching close
Article	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • heading • subheadings • bullet points • author's name

Format	
Document types	Characteristics
	Characteristics listed in bold are vital to the associated document type (for example, an email requires an appropriate email address).
Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • heading • subheadings • bullet points • author's name
Email	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • appropriate email address and subject line • salutation and matching close
Leaflet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • heading • subheadings • bullet points • numbering
Formal report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • heading • subheadings • bullet points • numbering • author's name
Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • formal • informal
Purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • persuasive • descriptive • explanatory • instructional
Audience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • workplace • familiar real-life situations
Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • beginning • middle • end

Learners **must not** have access to an external aid in relation to spelling, punctuation and grammar when taking an assessment for the Writing Component. Such external aids include dictionaries and spelling and grammar checking software.

Evidence requirements

For Speaking, Listening and Communicating only, at each level, the following types of evidence will be sampled by the external quality assurer (EQA) during a quality assurance visit.

For Level 1 and Level 2, evidence **must** include:

- Learner Observation and Assessment Record (LOAR) forms
 - any audio-visual recording relating to the assessment
-

Section 3: additional information

Resource requirements

Reading assessments require the use of a dictionary.

Sample and exemplar materials

These are available to download from the NCFE website. New materials are added during each academic session.

Sample papers are also available in-browser and can be scheduled via the online assessment system. These sample papers are available for learners to familiarise themselves with the online assessment system.

If assessors would like to mark sample onscreen assessments and provide feedback, the learner must not submit the sample assessment after responding to the tasks. This allows for the assessor to begin marking immediately. If the learner submits the sample assessment, the responses will not be viewable to the assessor.

Reasonable Adjustments and Special Considerations Policy

Learners who require reasonable adjustments or special considerations, including British Sign Language (BSL) and sign supported English, should discuss their requirements with their tutors.

For more information on the Reasonable Adjustments and Special Considerations Policy, please visit the NCFE website.

External assessment feedback

NCFE provides three different feedback options for the external assessments:

	Details	Availability	Price
Automated	All onscreen English Level 1 and Level 2 external assessments will provide a comprehensive breakdown of learner performance mapped to the subject content, provided in percentages.	Onscreen assessments only	Free

	Details	Availability	Price
Compact	Feedback mapped to the subject content, providing the learner's total marks available with the marks gained by the learner for that respective subject content area. In addition to the mark information is a high-level indication of how the learner did not gain marks.	Paper-based and onscreen assessments	Fees available on the NCFE website
Rich	Feedback is produced by the chief examiner and provides a detailed and thorough analysis of learner performance with guidance on how to address performance gaps.		

Examples of all feedback options are available on the NCFE website.

Skills Assessment

Skills Assessment provides a comprehensive e-learning solution for Functional Skills that incorporates Ofsted and Department for Education (DfE) compliant assessments, detailed skills diagnostics, video tutorials, progression tracking and innovative resources to aid skills development and workforce productivity.

Skills Assessment boasts a range of additional market-leading products:

- One Assessment is a revolutionary initial assessment which will assess a learner's levels in both English and maths in under 30 minutes
- Skills Portfolio is a bespoke digital portfolio that manages the complete end-to-end learner journey and allows the tutor to assess remotely, monitor learning progress, create dashboard reports and manage quality assurance
- Skills Work is an employability assessment with supporting resources, that embed the Gatsby Career Benchmark and are mapped to the key skills identified by the Confederation of British Industry (CBI)

Further information can be obtained from the NCFE website.

Provider Development

The Provider Development team provides dedicated support to centres approved to deliver Functional Skills. The purpose of this support is to assist with the teaching of the Functional Skills subject content, and to support understanding of the qualification's delivery.

Provider Development team activities include:

- upfront centre support via Microsoft Teams, phone or email
- Functional Skills delivery events
- on-demand videos

The Functional Skills Delivery Support page on the NCFE website is regularly updated and will keep centres informed on new curriculum guidance.

Chief examiner reports

The Functional Skills English chief examiner produces a report covering learner performance at Levels 1 and 2. This report identifies trends and raises awareness of common mistakes.

The chief examiner will also make suggestions to assist with learner performance.

These reports are available on the NCFE website.

NCFE Functional Skills news and updates

Sign up to the NCFE Functional Skills news and updates mailing list on the NCFE website in order to receive regular information regarding NCFE's Functional Skills service.

Learning resources

We offer a wide range of learning resources and materials to support the delivery of our qualifications. Please check the qualifications page on the NCFE website for more information and to see what is available for this qualification.

Contact us

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Tel: 0191 239 8000*
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**** To continue to improve our levels of customer service, telephone calls may be recorded for training and quality purposes.***

Change History Record

This section summarises the changes to this Qualification Specification since the last version (version 3.1 October 2025).

Version	Publication date	Summary of amendments
v1.0	October 2019	First publication
v1.1	January 2020	p.5, information regarding the wellbeing and safeguarding of learners added to Section 1
v1.2	March 2022	p.28, reference numbers updated
v1.3	July 2022	<p>Further information added to the how the qualifications are assessed section to confirm that unless otherwise stated in this specification, all learners taking this qualification must be assessed in English and all assessment evidence presented for external quality assurance must be in English.</p> <p>Information added to the entry guidance section to advise that registration is at the discretion of the centre, in accordance with equality legislation and should be made on the Portal.</p> <p>Information added to the support handbook section about how to access support handbooks.</p> <p>Paper-based assessment statement updated with recent changes.</p>
v1.4	October 2022	Guidance removed regarding recording speaking and listening assessment
v1.5	June 2023	Section 1 About these qualifications, Paper-based assessment guidance changed.
v2.0	October 2023	<p>The following sections of this specification have been updated:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How the qualifications are assessed • Provider Development • Speaking, Listening and Communicating <p>The following sections have been added to this specification:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level 1 Speaking, Listening and Communicating assessment • Level 2 Speaking, Listening and Communicating assessment • Evidence requirements <p>The following sections have been removed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Controlled assessments • Speaking, Listening and Communication • Subject content and assessment guidance

Version	Publication date	Summary of amendments
v2.1	November 2024	Further information added to the following sections: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level 1 Reading L1.2.12 • Level 1 Reading L1.2.14 • Level 2 Reading L2.2.14 • Level 2 Reading L2.2.16 • Level 2 Reading L2.2.19
v3.0	August 2025	Information has been updated in the following sections: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Qualification summary • External assessment • Speaking, Listening and Communicating • Level 1 Speaking, Listening and Communicating • Level 1 Reading • Level 1 Writing • Level 2 Speaking, Listening and Communicating • Level 2 Reading • Level 2 Writing • Section 3: additional information Further information has been added in the following sections: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level 1 Writing • Level 2 Reading L2.2.19 Information has been removed in the following sections: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level 1 Reading L1.2.12 • Level 1 Writing • Level 2 Reading L2.2.19
v3.1	October 2025	Information has been updated in following sections: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level 1 Writing p.19 Format table • Level 2 Writing p.27 Format table
v3.2	November 2025	Further information has been added in the following section: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level 2 Reading L2.2.14 p.22 language features