



PART OF **nocn** GROUP

# QUALIFICATION SPECIFICATION

## Suite of Functional Skills Qualifications in English

**NOCN Functional Skills Qualification in English at Level 1**

Qualification No: 603/5266/8

**NOCN Functional Skills Qualification in English at Level 2**

Qualification No: 603/5264/4

### Operational Start Date

23<sup>rd</sup> October 2019

### Version

1.3 May 2022

### To know more about NOCN:

- Visit the NOCN website: [www.nocn.org.uk](http://www.nocn.org.uk)
- Call the Customer Service Team: 0300 999 1177

[www.nocn.org.uk](http://www.nocn.org.uk)



## Introduction

NOCN is a leading awarding organisation that has been creating opportunities for learners for over 30 years. It is the organisation preserving the proud heritage of the Open College Network (OCN) in the UK and is a brand trusted by learners, colleges, training providers and employers who recognise NOCN qualifications as an indicator of competence and quality. A NOCN qualification recognises a learner's skills and knowledge and can support progression to employment, training and/or further education.

In addition to being an awarding organisation NOCN is also an apprenticeship assessment organisation and works internationally as well as in the UK.

This document is a resource for NOCN centres who wish to offer the NOCN Functional skills Qualifications in English at Levels 1 and 2.

## Contents

1. ABOUT FUNCTIONAL SKILLS QUALIFICATIONS .....	4
2. NOCN FUNCTIONAL SKILLS QUALIFICATION IN ENGLISH AT LEVEL 1 AND LEVEL 2.....	7
3. WHO ARE THE QUALIFICATIONS FOR?.....	12
4. ACHIEVING THE QUALIFICATIONS .....	14
5. HOW THE QUALIFICATIONS WILL BE ASSESSED .....	15
6. OFFERING THE QUALIFICATION .....	21
7. HOW ARE THE QUALIFICATIONS QUALITY ASSURED? .....	21
APPENDIX 1 .....	25
<i>Subject Content: Level 1</i> .....	26
<i>Subject Content: Level 2</i> .....	28
APPENDIX 2 .....	30
<i>Report on Observation of Internal Assessment</i> .....	31

## 1. About Functional Skills Qualifications

### Introduction to Functional Skills

Functional Skills qualifications aim to provide learners with the essential knowledge, skills and understanding they need to operate confidently, effectively and independently in everyday life and in the workplace. They also support learners in their progression into employment and further study.

Functional Skills Qualifications are currently available in English, mathematics and ICT at five levels (Levels 1 and 2 and Entry Levels 1, 2 and 3).

NOCN Functional Skills qualifications are learning tools that enable learners to develop and Centres to assess Functional Skills as determined by the DfEs specified subject content. Functional Skills enables the application of underpinning knowledge and problem solving to everyday situations and provide young people and adults with the knowledge and skills that can be utilised in further learning, life and work.

FSQs at Levels 1 and 2 are important qualifications, particularly in the case of English and mathematics. This is because in some contexts they form part of school and college accountability measures.

FSQs at all levels have an important role, as they are taken by school-age learners and adults, including as part of ESOL provision and apprenticeships. They play an important role for those in prison and for learners with learning difficulties or disabilities. Many learners take FSQs, with their overall annual entry size being second only to GCSEs.

### Development of Functional Skills

Functional Skills Qualifications (FSQs) were introduced in 2006, through a reform that contributed to addressing the skills shortages identified in the 2006 Leitch Review of Skills: *Prosperity for all in the global economy – world class skills*. The Government response to this is included in *World Class Skills: Implementing the Leitch Review of Skills in England*. FSQs provided learners with an alternative qualification in three key subject areas to GCSEs. FSQs were designed to recognise literacy, numeracy and ICT skills through assessments set in different contexts.

### Reforming Functional Skills Qualifications in English and mathematics

The Department for Education took the decision to reform FSQs in English and mathematics across all five levels. The reformed FSQs in English and mathematics were introduced for first teaching in September 2019.

The purposes of reformed FSQs are to provide:

- reliable evidence of learners' achievements against demanding, but appropriate, content that is relevant to the workplace;

- assessment of learners' underpinning knowledge as well as their ability to apply this in different contexts; and
- a foundation for progression into further study or employment.

The government expectations for the newly reformed FSQs are:

- the size of FSQs should not change significantly;
- they should retain a pass/fail grading system; and
- employers and learners should have confidence in relation to the comparability between these qualifications, irrespective of the awarding organisation and the year in which they were taken.
- retain the flexibility but recognise that there is a balance to be struck between retaining flexibility and introducing controls necessary to maintain qualification standards over time and between awarding organisations.

### **Functional Skills suite of qualifications**

Functional Skills Qualifications in English are to provide learners with the essential knowledge, skills and understanding that will enable them to operate confidently, effectively and independently in everyday life and into the workplace. They support learners and help with progression into employment and further study.

NOCN Functional Skills Qualifications (FSQs) aim to maintain the flexibility and workplace relevance of the legacy qualifications, whilst providing tools that enable learners to develop and Centres to assess Functional Skills as determined by a set of skills standards. NOCN Functional Skills Qualifications aim to ensure that learners have demonstrated the knowledge and skills that employers need through the attainment of the learning aims and outcomes set out at each level.

NOCN Functional Skills Qualifications are available for all learners to access, enhancing and developing confidence and independence for life and work. Functional Skills Qualifications provide assessment of the required skills and essential knowledge to enable individuals to operate effectively and independently.

Functional Skills qualifications are offered from Entry Level 1, 2 and 3 and Level 1 and Level 2, and are cited on the Register of Regulated Qualifications, and meet the Functional Skills Subject Content approved by DfE. These skills at Entry Level should be used autonomously, applying them to a range of contexts. At Levels 1 and 2 the developing knowledge and skills should be communicated with confidence, effectiveness and with increasing independence.

NOCN Functional Skills qualifications are assessment tools that enable learners to apply Functional Skills aims and outcomes set out at each level. Functional Skills Qualifications enables the application of the scope of study for each subject content as set out by the DfE.

## The DfE state the purpose for Functional Skills Qualifications for English as:

Purpose of Functional Skills English for Entry Levels: a qualification to demonstrate the ability at an appropriate level to read, write, speak, listen and communicate in English, and to apply this knowledge and these skills in familiar situations. Achievement of these qualifications can provide the basis for further study at Levels 1 and 2.

Purpose of Functional Skills English for Level 1 and Level 2: a qualification 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 Qualifications Subject Content

The Department for Education's Subject Content document states the purpose, learning aims and outcomes, and subject content for Functional Skills English at Entry Level, Level 1 and Level 2.

NOCN Functional Skills Qualifications suite consists of assessments that are set by NOCN and cover the subject content set out by DfE. Functional Skills Qualifications aim to prepare and equip individuals with the tools to develop skills and competences that are required to progress in day to day life, work and education.

NOCN English qualifications consist of three key elements, Reading, Writing and Speaking, Listening and Communication. All of these elements are assessed in separate identifiable tasks and assessments. This allows each element to be assessed either on separate occasions or in succession.

The Functional Skills criteria are designed to provide a framework for assessment and to be sufficiently flexible to be interpreted in a variety of contexts, for example in school and workplace settings, and by a range of users in line with Ofqual specifications. The specifications have been developed through a rigorous consultation process and have been designed to allow the demonstration of skills gained in English that are fundamental in supporting individuals into education, training or work.

DfE Functional Skills Qualifications **Subject Content** can be found here:

[functional-skills-subject-content-english](#)

## Functional Skills Qualification Assessments

Functional Skills Qualifications (FSQ) for English are devised of three components of Reading, Writing and Speaking, Listening and Communication (SLC). The assessments use and reinforce the subject content at the specified level and will reflect the learning aims and objectives. NOCN has created a suite of all assessments for FSQ in English.

FSQ assessments for each component may be taken on different days to support the needs of learners. Assessment opportunities will be offered on demand, so that learners may access the assessments when their Teachers/Tutors/Assessors feel they are ready. The learners take the assessments on the booked assessment date and time.

## Reading and Writing

The Reading and Writing assessments are externally set (by NOCN) and externally marked (by NOCN) and **must** take place under examination conditions. Centres will not have access to the mark schemes. The assessments have detailed guidelines which outline how the assessments must be administered.

Learners will require a dictionary for the Reading assessment, however a dictionary is not permitted in the Writing assessment.

The assessments are to be taken on the booked date and time and the assessments are sent to NOCN for marking. The NOCN service standard for issuing results to centres is 20 working days from receipt of the assessment.<sup>1</sup>

## SLC

For Speaking, Listening and Communication, the assessment may be centre-set ensuring that it meets the specified requirements of the scope of study at the specified level. The SLC assessment is conducted under controlled assessment conditions as specified in the Assessment information and Guidance section of the assessment.

The assessments for all components must be booked for a specific date and time.

Functional Skills assessments have specified time durations in which they are to be carried out.

NOCN time allocated for Level 1 and 2 are:

- Level 1: 2 hours 30 minutes
- Level 2: 2 hours 30 minutes

NOCN times are set to enable learners at these levels to be able to satisfactorily complete and achieve the set outcomes and subject content as laid out by the DfE. The timings reflect the subject content requirement ensuring that the coverage and content are efficiently met and managed. The timings and ensure that the assessment is fit for purpose, can be delivered efficiently, and allows each learner the opportunity to generate sufficient evidence which can be authenticated.

## 2. NOCN Functional Skills Qualification in English at Level 1 and Level 2

Functional Skills Qualifications (FSQ) in English enable learners to evidence their achievements against the subject content set by DfE. Learners will demonstrate their application of Speaking, Listening and Communicating, Reading and Writing and their ability to apply this in different contexts such as in everyday life and in the workplace. Functional Skills English assessments aim to assist individuals in their confidence, progression and development into employment and further education.

The Functional Skills Subject Content in English aims to equip learners with the skills and confidence to fluently apply and demonstrate their competence in English.

---

<sup>1</sup> NOCN undertakes an awarding process to set pass marks for new assessments. This means that the service standard for new assessments is 30 working days.

The NOCN Functional Skills qualifications in English at Level 1 and Level 2 are designed to assess Functional Skills in English at Level 1 and Level 2 as determined by the Functional Skills criteria, which aims to equip learners with the skills and confidence to apply and adapt their English knowledge and skills to situations in their life and work in a range of contexts and for various purposes.

The qualifications require learners to successfully achieve summative assessment tasks that are externally set for Reading and Writing, and externally set/centre-set/adapted for Speaking, Listening and Communication. Learners can take these when they have undergone a relevant teaching and learning programme that covers the skills criteria in their entirety at either Level 1 or Level 2 and have developed the appropriate skills ready for assessment.

Functional Skills qualifications are achieved by the successful completion of summative components in Reading, Writing and Speaking, Listening and Communication. Learners need to achieve a pass at the same level in each of the three components to achieve a full Functional Skills qualification in English at Level 1 or Level 2. Some exemptions may apply, please see the Reasonable Adjustment and Special Considerations guide.

### **Learning aims and outcomes at Levels 1 and 2**

Functional Skills English qualifications at these levels set out by DfE 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, are able to communicate with confidence, effectiveness and with an increasing level of independence. (DfE -00047-2018)

The assessments for SLC can be accessed from the vLearn website with a secure login. Centres may use the NOCN devised assessments, or adapt/centre-set assessments in line with the guidance provided.

### **Centre adaptations for Speaking, Listening and Communication**

NOCN assessments for SLC may be adapted by the centre to ensure that learners are not disadvantaged whilst adhering to Ofqual conditions and DfE requirements. Centres wishing to make use of the adaptations will be given bespoke guidance and training through their submission process, to ensure reliability and validity of the assessment.

The adapted or centre-set assessment for SLC assessments should be made available to NOCN at least 15 working days before the planned use of the assessment with learners to allow the assessment to be standardised in the same way as other NOCN devised assessments.

Centres are not permitted to amend:

- (a) the knowledge, skills or understanding that a Learner is required to demonstrate in the question or task,
- (b) the level of Demand of the question or task, or
- (c) any specified conditions under which the assessment must be completed, including in particular the time within which the assessment must be completed (unless any such amendment is part of a Reasonable Adjustment or for the purposes of Special Consideration) (Ofqual18/6385/4)

The language used on the assessment paper is required to be clear and straightforward. Any stimulus material used is appropriate to the level and aids understanding where deemed necessary and unlikely to cause offence. When NOCN is satisfied that the assessment meets the subject content, the centre will receive confirmation that it has been approved. The assessment will be added to NOCN assessment bank. The requirements set by NOCN are reasonable and do not impose unnecessary or burdensome requirements to centres complying with General Conditions of Recognition.

### **Individual assessment times**

NOCN assessment time frames allow each specified level of attainment detailed in the specification to be reached by a learner who has attained the required level of knowledge, skills and understanding. They also facilitate accurate and consistent assessment and differentiation both within and across the levels.

NOCN assessment time for each individual component within the Functional Skills Qualifications for English are:

#### **Speaking Listening and Communicating:**

- Level 1 time of assessment 30 minutes
- Level 2 time of assessment 30 minutes

**Reading:**

- Level 1 time of assessment 1 hour
- Level 2 time of assessment 1 hour

**Writing:**

- Level 1 time of assessment 1 hour
- Level 2 time of assessment 1 hour

The total marks available have therefore increased as compared to the legacy assessments. The total marks for the reformed assessments are:

**Reading:**

- Level 1 – 32 marks
- Level 2 – 35 marks

**Writing:**

- Level 1 – 54 marks
- Level 2 – 54 marks

SLC is not numerically marked.

- **Guided Learning Hours**

Guided Learning Hours (GLH) are a guide to the amount of Teachers/Tutors/Assessors supervised or directed study time a learner will need to complete the learning needed for a qualification. NOCN recognises that every learner is different and the actual time taken may vary beyond the 55 GLH stated.

**Total Qualification Time (TQT)**

The Total Qualification Time for these qualifications is 55 hours.

TQT has been agreed by considering the total number of learning hours required for the average learner to achieve this qualification.

TQT is split into two areas:

- **Guided Learning Hours (GLH):**
  - learning activity under the immediate guidance or supervision of a lecturer, supervisor, tutor or other appropriate provider of education or training
  - includes the activity of being assessed if the assessment takes place under the immediate guidance or supervision of a lecturer, supervisor, tutor or other appropriate provider of education or training.
- **Other Learning Hours (OLH):**
  - an estimate of the number of hours a learner will spend, as directed by (but not under the immediate guidance or supervision of) a lecturer, supervisor, tutor or other appropriate provider of education or training, including:
    - preparatory work
    - self-study
    - or any other form of education or training, including assessment.

Examples of GLH activities include:

- Classroom-based learning supervised by a Teacher/Tutor/Assessor
- Work-based learning supervised by a Teacher/Tutor/Assessor
- Live webinar or telephone tutorial with a teach in real time
- E-learning supervised by a Teachers/Tutors/Assessors in real time
- All forms of assessment which take place under the immediate guidance or supervision of an appropriate provider of training
- Exam time

Examples of OLH activities include:

- Independent and unsupervised research/learning
- Unsupervised compilation of a portfolio of work experience
- Unsupervised e-learning
- Unsupervised e-assessment
- Unsupervised coursework
- Watching a pre-recorded podcast or webinar
- Unsupervised work-based learning

The Total Qualification Time for these qualifications is 55 hours with no other learning as per the guidance in the ministerial letter [Functional Skills GLH ministerial letter.pdf](#).

### **Relationship with National Criteria**

The NOCN Functional Skills Qualifications in English at Level 1 and 2 have been designed in accordance with the General Conditions of Recognition (Ofqual/18/6405), Functional Skills English Guidance (Ofqual/18/6385/5), Decisions on Functional Skills reform (Ofqual/18/6985/2), Functional Skills English Conditions and Requirements (Ofqual/18/6385/4) and Subject Content Functional Skills: English (DFE-00047-2018). The assessments interpret the subject content and identifies that each level of the qualification subsumes and builds upon the content at lower levels. The Functional Skills Qualification criteria for English Level 1 and 2 can be found in Appendix 1.

### **Language Requirements**

The Functional Skills Qualifications are only available in England and therefore these qualifications are only available in English.

### **Progression Opportunities**

NOCN FSQ in English at Level 1 and Level 2 enable progression to further learning, employment, and learning and development opportunities within employment.

FSQ are designed from Entry 1 to Level 2 to ensure clear progression pathways and personal development opportunities. The levels comply with the level descriptors for positioning units within the Regulations Qualifications Framework. This will ensure that learner achievement is clearly understood by both the learner and audiences outside of the education environment.

The NOCN Functional Skills Qualifications in English at Level 1 allows learners to progress to:

- GSCE English;
- further study for vocational, vocational-related or general qualifications at Level 1 (for example, Level 1 NVQs or Level 1 Diplomas);
- further study at Level 2 (for example, Level 2 Functional Skills English, NVQs or Level 2 Diplomas).

After successfully achieving the NOCN Functional Skills Qualifications in English at Level 2 learners may be able to progress to:

- GSCE English;
- further study for vocational, vocational-related or general qualifications at Level 2 (for example, Level 2 NVQs or Level 2 Diplomas);
- further study at Level 3 (for example, Level 3 NVQs, Level 3 Diplomas or GCE A Levels).

The NOCN Functional Skills Qualifications in English at Level 1 and Level 2 will support study in the full range of subjects and sectors.

### **3. Who are the qualifications for?**

There are no age restrictions for these qualifications.

Functional Skills Qualifications are vital to the personal development of all learners.

FSQs at all levels have an important role, as they are taken by school-age learners and adults, including as part of ESOL provision and apprenticeships. They play an important role for those in prison and for learners with learning difficulties or disabilities (Ofqual/17/6287).

The qualification is suitable for a wide range of learners including:

- adults involved in learning programmes to prepare them for work
- adults in work to provide progression opportunities
- young people involved in GCSEs in schools
- those involved in Diplomas and Apprenticeships.

These qualifications are assessed primarily through tasks, rather than traditional knowledge based tests, helping learners to enhance and apply their problem solving skills effectively.

Adults and young people will develop vital problem-solving skills, ensuring that they are well equipped for success in employment, further learning and life.

Employers will also benefit as Functional Skills Qualifications will help to ensure that employees are able to apply fundamental problem solving skills in work situations, improving effectiveness and productivity.

## Functional Skills Qualification Assessments

Functional Skills Qualification assessments are designed:

- As summative assessments can be used when the learner is ready for assessment, that is; they have developed the appropriate skills through a teaching and learning programme.
- To assess confident and competent use of the three component skills of Speaking, Listening and Communication, Reading and Writing.
- To assess Functional Skills Qualification criteria in their entirety at either Level 1 or Level 2.

Speaking, Listening and Communication assessments at Level 1 and 2 are externally set (by NOCN) and externally quality assured (by NOCN) but learners are assessed by centres under controlled conditions as specified in the Assessment information and Guidance section of the assessment. The assessments may be adapted in line with NOCN requirements.

The SLC assessments are downloaded from the vLearn website with a secure login and may use the NOCN devised assessments, centres may devise centre-set or adapted assessments in line with the guidance provided.

Reading and Writing assessments are externally set (by NOCN) and externally marked (by NOCN) and may not be centre-set or adapted by the centre.

### Restrictions on Learner Entry

There are no restrictions on learner entry to these qualifications. However, learners should have undertaken relevant initial assessments to ensure that they are following an appropriate learning programme leading to the summative assessment.

### Recommended Prior Learning

There is no recommended prior knowledge, attainment or experience needed by learners wishing to enrol on these qualifications.

### Learners with Particular Requirements

Assessment within the NOCN Functional Skills Qualification in English at Level 1 and 2 is designed to be accessible and inclusive. The assessment methodology is appropriate and rigorous for individuals or groups of learners.

If you are a NOCN Approved Centre and have learners with particular requirements, please see the **NOCN Reasonable Adjustments and Special Consideration Policy and Procedure** within the Help and Support Section on [www.nocn.org.uk](http://www.nocn.org.uk)

The NOCN Centre Approval process requires policy statements on Equal Opportunities and Diversity and Disability Discrimination which will be reviewed by NOCN. Further guidance is

available in the Quality Assurance Manual. Please contact [assurance@nocn.org.uk](mailto:assurance@nocn.org.uk) if you need further details.

The Permissions Table lists the most commonly requested adjustments to standard assessment arrangements. It is not intended to be a comprehensive list and Centres have a duty to seek advice from NOCN or its Delivery Partners (as appropriate) in any case where they do not consider that they have the necessary expertise to judge whether a Reasonable Adjustment is needed, and/or how it should be applied.

Centres can use Wide Range Achievement Tests (WRAT) and similar assessment tools in order to evidence their request for learner reasonable adjustments. These can be used either as a “Tool” or as a guide to assist them in their initial assessment of the learners where appropriate.

It is a requirement that the centres present the WRAT to the Awarding Organisation as a whole and completed document in their application for the reasonable adjustment to be granted. The documentary evidence within the WRAT must show that the learner does meet the requirements to receive a reasonable adjustment.

#### **4. Achieving the qualifications**

Learners will undergo appropriate teaching and learning programmes as would normally be delivered by centres. Curriculum teaching and learning must cover the Functional Skills Qualification criteria for English in their entirety at Level 1 and 2. Learners can take the summative assessment for the qualifications when they have developed the appropriate skills and are ready for assessment.

The summative assessment consists of externally set assessment tasks/questions that assess the whole of the skill criteria and the underpinning coverage and range. Sample assessments and detailed mark schemes, which are mapped to the Functional Skills Qualification Subject Content and Ofqual’s Conditions and Requirements for English are available on the NOCN website under Functional Skills.

##### **Assessment Conditions and Procedures**

Full guidance on the administrative procedures may be found within the NOCN Examination and Invigilation Policy and Procedure. Centres are to adhere to the guidance in NOCN Quality Assurance Manual <https://www.nocn.org.uk/support/quality-assurance/>, for approved Centres to deliver NOCN Qualifications. It is intended that learners will take assessments for the qualifications ‘on demand’ when they are ready.

Centres must specify the required dates and times for all assessments, including the SLC assessments, when they register the learners. The registrations for the SLC assessments of the qualification must be received by NOCN no less than 5 working days prior to the assessment.

Learners must take the assessments for Reading, Writing and SLC on the booked date and time of assessment. In exceptional circumstances, centres may apply to NOCN for learners to take assessments up to two hours before and two hours after the booked time. The booked assessment time cannot be changed without NOCN approval. Each of the components may be completed on different dates, and this will be identified when registering the learners. NOCN will appoint an External Quality Assurer to check that the assessments are taking place in accordance with NOCN guidelines. The completed externally set Reading and Writing assessments must then be sent to NOCN within 48 hours of completion for external marking.

Assessments must be taken under controlled conditions.

### **Embedding Functional Skills Qualification Assessments**

The qualifications can be delivered on a standalone basis or embedded into vocational/other qualifications.

The Functional Skills Level 1 and Level 2 English assessments are delivered as a qualification at a stage when the learner has developed the appropriate skills following a relevant teaching and learning programme. The assessment could therefore be used alongside other provision.

Embedded teaching and learning combines the development of literacy, language and numeracy with vocational, ICT or other skills. Using this approach, learners have the opportunity to achieve a Functional Skills Level 1 or Level 2 English qualification as well as the vocational/other qualification.

## **5. How the qualifications will be assessed**

Learners are assessed using different methods as described in the following section.

The qualifications are awarded to learners who successfully achieve a pass in the summative assessment for each of the three components of Reading, Writing and Speaking, Listening and Communication, at the same level. Where a learner has not yet met the subject content to be awarded a pass, a result of fail will be issued.

### **Assessment**

Achievement of the qualifications is through successful completion of three individual components.

The Speaking, Listening and Communicating assessment is set by NOCN but may be adapted by centres in line with NOCN instructions and guidance. It is marked by centres and externally quality assured by NOCN.

The Reading and Writing assessments are set and marked by NOCN.

No pre-release material is used for Reading and Writing.

Learners may use word processing software in the writing assessment, but it is not mandatory. If technology is utilised the spell and grammar functions must be deactivated. No dictionaries are permitted for the writing assessment.

Learners are permitted to use dictionaries for the reading element only.

NOCN will retain completed assessments for NOCN standardisation and question analysis activity.

### **Assessment Design**

Assessments items/questions/tasks will be reviewed at least annually, more often if used extensively.

NOCN SLC assessments may be adapted or centre-set ensuring that it meets the specified requirements of the scope of study at the specified level to ensure that learners are not disadvantaged adhering to the guidance set out by Ofqual conditions and requirements and in conjunction with DfE requirements.

### **Speaking, Listening and Communication**

The DfE define Speaking, Listening and Communication as:

‘Speaking, listening and communicating’ within Functional Skills English qualifications is non-written communication, normally conducted face-to-face, and can also include ‘virtual’ communication methods such as telephone or spoken web-based technologies. The terms ‘speaking, listening and communicating’ are intended to be interpreted in a broad, inclusive way and are not intended to create any unnecessary barriers to students with speech or hearing impairment.

NOCN Speaking, Listening and Communication (SLC) assessments within the Functional Skills Qualifications suite assess information shared through the verbal exchange of information. The SLC assessment is the sharing of ideas and opinions in a range of contexts, in the workplace and in real life.

The needs of individual learners may vary. As per the guidance above, the term SLC should be interpreted as meaning communication, discussion and presentation that:

- Can include use of sign language (for example British Sign Language (BSL), sign-supported English) 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 Communication. No other languages are permitted as alternatives to English.
- Can include access to augmentative speech equipment and such software as constitutes the way of communicating.

- Does not depend solely on the use of written language or require the individual/s with whom the learner is communicating to be able to read (as these skills are covered by the requirements for Reading and Writing).

**Table 1: The criteria for a Pass**

	Performance descriptor
Pass	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Learners generally demonstrate the requirements for the level:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ consistently,</li> <li>□ effectively, and</li> <li>□ to an appropriate degree for that level.</li> </ul> </li>   <li>■ 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.</li> </ul>

Reference: Ofqual/18/6385/4

The rationale for the marks for all of SLC components is that the assessment outcome is determined by the extent to which the learner meets the criteria for a pass or fail. Each assessment for the SLC component complies with the requirements noted in the Ofqual conditions.

In order to achieve a Pass, the learner is required to meet the subject content of the SLC via the Scope of Study criteria set out on the Assessment Observation Record Sheet. The learner is required to meet each specified criterion on most occasions within each task.

The following descriptors must be considered when assessing the learner’s performance. To achieve a pass for the assessment at Level 1 and Level 2 the learner must generally demonstrate the requirements for a pass.

To achieve a pass for the assessment at Level 1 and Level 2 the learner must generally demonstrate the requirements for the level;

- consistently
- effectively
- to an appropriate level for the qualification

The Teacher/Tutor/Assessor should insert a tick in the Assessment Observation Record Sheet if they have observed the learner doing the activity consistently, effectively, at an appropriate level for the qualification; insufficient demonstration of any individual Scope of Study is balanced by an appropriate demonstration of the same Scope of Study within either task. The Teacher/Tutor/Assessor should insert a cross if the Scope of Study is not met in a task.

The Overall column in the Assessment Observation Record Sheet should show a tick against each Scope of Study that a learner has achieved consistently, effectively, at an appropriate level

for the qualification to ensure a Pass. If a cross appears in the Overall column, then the learner has failed the assessment.

It is anticipated that centres may complete the Speaking, Listening and Communication assessment independently and on separate occasions to the Reading and Writing assessments. Centres may download the Speaking, Listening and Communication assessments from vLearn website with a secure login.

A minimum of 10% of SLC assessments must be sampled by an Internal Quality Assurer (including the observation of live assessments) and a written record made of the observation (see Appendix 2: Report on Observation of Internal Assessment). It is good practice for centres to audio or video record SLC activity for internal quality assurance (IQA) and external quality assurance (EQA) purposes. Once the assessment records are completed by the IQA, the centre should complete an Internal Quality Assurance sample of the documents.

When the centre is satisfied that the learners have achieved the criteria for Speaking, Listening and Communication at the level required, the centre contact or IQA should complete the online RAC form and send this to NOCN to claim achievement of the Speaking, Listening and Communication assessment.

In addition, centres must retain copies of the Speaking, Listening and Communication assessment records including the Report on Observation of Internal Assessment (see Appendix 2) and completed assessment records for each individual learner. These must be made available at the next External Quality Assurance (EQA) visit to the centre.

NOCN will provide clear and effective arrangements in order to monitor the delivery and marking of SLC assessments. Centres will receive nominated EQA visits, and remote samples to ensure scrutiny of marking that is undertaken and standardisation of centre marking. The EQA reports will highlight any issues and additional training requirements for individual centres and will be addressed in line with NOCN policies and procedures.

## Reading and Writing

### Functional Skills English (Reading):

Functional Skills Reading assessment assess the learner's ability to read a range of texts with confidence and fluidity. Learners will be able to apply and their skills to read more confidently. Learners will be able to engage and understand text in everyday life and work. Learners will be able to read with accuracy and effectiveness at the specified level.

The rubrics for Reading assessments can be read to learners at all levels by a reader, however, the main body of text may not be as the purpose of assessment is to identify the skills criteria in reading. Texts used may be taken from real life contexts and can include instructional texts, persuasive texts and informative texts, for example; leaflets, short stories/reports and articles.

Functional Skills text is defined as materials that include the use of words that are written, printed, on screen or presented using Braille. As a reasonable adjustment, learners who are classified as disabled under the terms of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA), and use assistive technology as their normal way of reading, can demonstrate that they are able to independently meet the requirements of the reading criteria through use of screen reader

software. A human reader cannot be used to demonstrate the requirements of the criteria as this does not meet the requirement for independence. As a last resort, an exemption from the reading requirements can be requested for learners who cannot use assistive technology.

The learners will take the assessments on the planned assessment date(s) and times and the assessments are to be sent to NOCN within 48 hours of completion for marking.

All tasks must be achieved to gain a full qualification. Reading and Writing assessments at Level 1 and 2 are externally set and assessed, Speaking, Listening and Communication is internally assessed and centres may use either the NOCN devised assessment or centre-set/adapted assessment in line with the guidance stated. Each component assessment has detailed guidelines which outlines how the assessment must be administered and a detailed mark scheme identifies how marks should be allocated. Centres will not have access to the mark schemes for Reading and Writing at this level.

### **Functional Skills English (Writing):**

Functional Skills Writing assessment assesses the learners' ability to produce clear writing with varying complexity. Learners will be able to write accurately and effectively with correct spelling, punctuation and grammar. The Writing assessment comprises of tasks that cover the standards and the scope of study. Learners may be asked to complete a range of activities from letter writing, email, forms or posters. The rubrics of the Writing tasks may be read in all levels by a reader.

As a reasonable adjustment, learners who are disabled under the terms of the Equality Act 2010 can use assistive technology as their way of producing written text. A human scribe cannot be used to demonstrate the requirements of the criteria as this does not meet the requirement for independence. As a last resort, an exemption from the writing requirements can be requested for learners with disabilities who cannot use assistive technology.

The learners will take the assessments on the planned assessment date(s) and times and the assessments are to be sent to NOCN within 48 hours of completion for marking.

### **Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar**

NOCN have applied the weighting allocation within the permitted range for all levels of Functional Skills English Qualifications in order to assess the spelling, punctuation and grammar of the learners as directed through the conditions and requirements. The weighting allocation against each spelling, punctuation and grammar element within the writing component for all levels allows the learner to generate appropriate evidence that they have or have not attained the required level of knowledge, skills and understanding.

The permitted ranges of Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar stipulated are 40 - 45 % for Level 1 and 2. NOCN writing assessments fully comply with these stipulations.

The learners will take the assessments on the booked assessment date(s) and times. The assessments are to be sent to NOCN within 48 hours of completion for marking.

**Reading and Writing assessments** may be taken on different days.

All assessments must be achieved at the same level to gain a full qualification. Reading and Writing assessments at Level 1 and 2 are externally set and assessed, Speaking, Listening and Communication is internally assessed and centres may use either the NOCN devised assessment or centre-set/adapted assessment in line with the guidance stated. Each component assessment has detailed guidelines which outlines how the assessment must be administered and a detailed mark scheme identifies how marks should be allocated. Centres will not have access to the mark schemes for Reading and Writing at this level.

### **Marking**

The Reading and Writing assessments are externally marked by NOCN. Learners will complete the assessments on the booked assessment date at a specific time. Assessments will then be submitted within 48 hours of completion to NOCN for marking.

NOCN permits centres to mark SLC English assessments as per the designated mark scheme and guidance provided. The mark scheme specifies the scope of study that is being measured in order to achieve the component. Learners must complete the assessment in the allocated time. All assessments must be marked by the Functional Skills English Teacher/Tutor/ Assessor.

Marking must adhere to NOCN guidance for marking quality assurance. Centres are to ensure that the Internal Quality Assurance process is adhered to and that suitable evidence is made available for External Quality Assurance visits. These processes are in place to manage the risk of authenticity and accuracy of the centre procedures and evaluation.

Speaking, Listening and Communication assessments are internally assessed using the NOCN assessment mark sheet and guidance, and externally quality assured. 10% of the assessments must be sampled by an Internal Quality Assurer (including the observation of live assessments) and a written record produced and submitted for EQA assurance.

Centres are to complete the Learner Tracking Sheet to track and monitor SLC assessments undertaken including re-sits. The Learner Tracking Sheet is to be downloaded from vLearn, NOCN's secure website and be used for Internal Quality Assurance and must be provided for External Quality Assurance visits.

### **Assessment Summary**

To achieve a qualification, the learner must pass the assessment for each of the components at the same level. However, in some circumstances exemptions for components may be applied. Where a learner has not yet met the subject content to be awarded a pass, a result of fail will be issued.

### **Certification**

Results are issued to centres for the Reading and Writing components. For SLC, unless DCS has been granted, the External Quality Assurer will agree the Recommendation for the Award of Credit form to allow certification of the qualification to be carried out.

Where no exemption has been granted, learners must pass the assessments of Functional Skills: Reading, Writing and Speaking, Listening and Communication at the same level to be awarded the full qualification.

If a learner has completed one or two English components with other awarding organisations, this achievement may be acknowledged by NOCN. The centre must complete the Application for the Transfer of Functional Skills English Components.

If a pass has not been achieved, a fail notification statement will be provided, no certification will be processed.

## 6. Offering the qualification

### Recognised Centres

If you are already recognised to offer NOCN qualifications and would like more information about offering this qualification, please contact: [business-enquiries@nocn.org.uk](mailto:business-enquiries@nocn.org.uk)

Use Horizon to add this qualification to your centre.

### New Centres

If you are interested in offering NOCN qualifications but not currently working with NOCN, you will need to be recognised as an NOCN approved centre. This process includes:

- Confirmation that your organisation has an adequate infrastructure in place to support the effective delivery of NOCN qualifications
- An agreement signed by the principal authority in the organisation confirming adherence to the specified terms and conditions. This safeguards the quality assurance standards, in relation the delivery and assessment process.

If you would like more information about becoming an NOCN centre and offering this qualification please see 'New centres' under the 'Centres' section on our website [www.nocn.org.uk](http://www.nocn.org.uk) or contact [business-enquiries@nocn.org.uk](mailto:business-enquiries@nocn.org.uk)

## 7. How are the qualifications quality assured?

### 7.1 General Information

All providers wishing to deliver these qualifications will need to demonstrate the ability to manage and deliver the assessments, including adherence to NOCN quality assurance and assessment regulations.

NOCN will provide guidance and give support in enabling you to deliver the qualification.

Functional Skills English Level 1 and Level 2 Qualifications Reading and Writing components are assessed through an externally set and marked assessment so there is no requirement for Internal Quality Assurance of these assessments.

Speaking, Listening and Communication assessments are internally assessed, and externally quality assured.

### Staffing requirements

**Teachers/Tutors/Assessors should be** competent and confident in the subject being taught. They also need a detailed understanding of the Qualification Specification and assessment requirements, in order to fully and effectively support the learners. There is no requirement to hold any specific teaching or subject specialist qualification. However, NOCN recommends that Teachers/Tutors/Assessors hold or should be working towards a teaching qualification. In addition, they should hold or should be working towards an appropriate subject specialist qualification.

**To become an IQA for Functional Skills**, an Internal Quality Assurer has to be able meet the quality assurance requirements for the specific qualification, and therefore should be confident in the subject area. They also need a detailed understanding of the Qualification Specification and assessment requirements, in order to fully support the learners and the Assurer and to be compliant with NOCN requirements. There is no requirement to hold any specific teaching or subject specialist qualification. However, NOCN recommends that an IQA holds or should be working towards an Internal Quality Assurer qualification. A teaching qualification would be desirable to fully support the role requirements. In addition, they should ensure that their Continuous Professional Development record evidences recent and ongoing upskilling in Functional Skills. Ideally this should show a minimum of two years' experience in Skills for Life or Key Skills or Functional Skills delivery.

### **Direct Claims Status (DCS)**

#### **Level 1 and 2**

Centres may be granted DCS for the SLC component once the requirements as detailed in the NOCN Direct Claims Status Policy and Procedure have been met. However, even when DCS has been attained, all assessments must be retained for a period of at least 3 years and be available to NOCN upon request. Centres must submit a current Curriculum Vitae (CV) for all Teachers/Tutors/Assessors and Internal Quality Assurers for Functional Skills qualifications to NOCN to be held on file. External Quality Assurers will recommend that the centre is approved for DCS for Functional Skills if the centre meets all direct claims status requirements. Internal Quality Assurers will normally be approved for specific subject areas and levels.

The centre should release at least one centre representative to NOCN Functional Skills Centre Events/training on an annual basis which should then be cascaded within the centre. The training will be available at a number of venues throughout the country. In addition, training will be available on an ongoing basis i.e. centre visit, EQA intervention or remote activity. Additional bespoke training is available on demand.

#### **The role of the IQA**

The IQA will monitor and evaluate assessment practices to ensure compliance with requirements, consistent assessment decisions and advise on improvements. A key duty is to conduct observations of the assessment process for Speaking, Listening and Communicating and complete a written record of their findings. The IQA will quality assure a 10% sample of assessed work and completed mark schemes, including the observation of live assessments. They will lead standardisation across the Teachers/Tutors/Assessors to ensure that the mark schemes are being applied consistently. They will be able to sign off the RAC once DCS has been approved.

## Withdrawal of Direct Claims Status (DCS)

Where there is evidence that the required standards have not been met, NOCN may decide to withdraw DCS.

## 7.2 Invigilation

Centres must comply with the NOCN Examination and Invigilation Policy and Procedure and follow the guidance within the Invigilation Handbook for Reading and Writing Assessments. **In addition, there are specific requirements for Functional Skills qualifications which have been agreed by all awarding organisations which offer the qualifications:**

*The head of centre must ensure that:*

### **Administration of exams**

*(‘Administration’ includes initial receipt of confidential materials, secure storage, movement and preparation of materials for scheduled assessments, and registration, secure storage and return of materials to the awarding organisation after scheduled assessments are completed)*

- a. No tutor of a Functional Skills qualification can be involved in the administration of the assessment materials for level 1 and 2 assessments in that subject, regardless of the level they teach.*

### **Invigilation of exams**

- b. A Functional Skills subject tutor must not be involved in the invigilation of that subject, even if they have not taught those learners (i.e. a Functional Skills English tutor must not invigilate any Functional Skills English assessments and a Functional Skills Maths tutor must not invigilate any Functional Skills Maths assessments, regardless of the level they teach).*

### **Exceptions**

*A centre must ensure that it has a suitable invigilator available for all Level 1 and 2 Functional Skills assessments.*

*There are no automatic exceptions to this rule. In exceptional circumstances, where only a tutor can access the assessment location and/or the learners, some adjustment may be granted by prior arrangement with, and at the discretion of, the awarding organisation.*

*Any exception on these grounds **must** be agreed by the awarding organisation in advance of the assessment date.*

*An exception may also require the centre to agree to additional measures to ensure the security of materials and additional monitoring by the awarding organisation.*

Please contact NOCN if you have any queries relating to the information above.

### **7.3 Standardisation**

Standardisation is a process that promotes consistency in the understanding and application of standards, as it:

- establishes statements on the standard of evidence required to meet the assessment subject content for the units in NOCN qualifications
- makes recommendations on assessment practice and produces advice and guidance for the assessment of units
- identifies good practice in assessment.

It is a requirement of the Centre Recognition Process that each Centre offering the qualifications must contribute assessment materials and learners' evidence from SLC for NOCN standardisation if requested.

NOCN will notify Centres of the required sample for standardisation purposes. Assessment materials, learners' evidence and Teachers/Tutors/Assessors feedback will be collected by External Quality Assurers on behalf of NOCN.



## **APPENDIX 1**

### **FUNCTIONAL SKILLS CRITERIA: ENGLISH**

## Subject Content: Level 1

### Speaking, Listening and Communicating

#### Scope of study

Text: this should include narratives, explanations, discussions, instructions, information, descriptions and presentations all of varying lengths.

1. Identify relevant information and lines of argument in explanations or presentations
2. Make requests and ask relevant questions to obtain specific information in different contexts
3. Respond effectively to detailed questions
4. Communicate information, ideas and opinions clearly and accurately on a range of topics
5. Express opinions and arguments and support them with evidence
6. Follow and understand discussions and make contributions relevant to the situation and the subject
7. Use appropriate phrases, registers and adapt contributions to take account of audience, purpose and medium
8. Respect the turn-taking rights of others during discussions, using appropriate language for interjection

### Reading

#### Scope of study

Text: this should include a range of straightforward texts on a range of topics and of varying lengths that instruct, describe, explain and persuade.

9. Identify and understand the main points, ideas and details in texts
10. Compare information, ideas and opinions in different texts
11. Identify meanings in texts and distinguish between fact and opinion
12. Recognise that language and other textual features can be varied to suit different audiences and purposes
13. Use reference materials and appropriate strategies (e.g. using knowledge of different word types) for a range of purposes, including to find the meaning of words
14. Understand organisational and structural features and use them to locate relevant information (e.g. index, menus, subheadings, paragraphs) in a range of straightforward texts

- |   |
|---|
| 15. Infer from images meanings not explicit in the accompanying text  |
| 16. Recognise vocabulary typically associated with specific types and purposes of texts (e.g. formal, informal, instructional, descriptive, explanatory and persuasive) |
| 17. Read and understand a range of specialist words in context  |
| 18. Use knowledge of punctuation to aid understanding of straightforward texts  |

## Writing

### Scope of study

Text: this should include straightforward texts such as narratives, instructions, explanations and reports of varying lengths.

### Spelling, punctuation and grammar

- |   |
|---|
| 19. Use a range of punctuation correctly (e.g. full stops, question marks, exclamation marks, commas, possessive apostrophes) |
| 20. Use correct grammar (e.g. subject-verb agreement, consistent use of different tenses, definite and indefinite articles)   |
| 21. Spell words used most often in work, study and daily life, including specialist words                                     |

### Writing composition

- |  |
|--|
| 22. Communicate information, ideas and opinions clearly, coherently and accurately   |
| 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 |
| 24. Use format, structure and language appropriate for audience and purpose  |
| 25. Write consistently and accurately in complex sentences, using paragraphs where appropriate   |

## Subject Content: Level 2

### Speaking, Listening and Communicating

#### Scope of study

Text: 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.

1. Identify relevant information from extended explanations or presentations
2. Follow narratives and lines of argument
3. Respond effectively to detailed or extended questions and feedback
4. Make requests and ask detailed and pertinent questions to obtain specific information in a range of contexts
5. Communicate information, ideas and opinions clearly and effectively, providing further detail and development if required
6. Express opinions and arguments and support them with relevant and persuasive evidence
7. Use language that is effective, accurate and appropriate to context and situation
8. Make relevant and constructive contributions to move discussion forward
9. Adapt contributions to discussions to suit audience, purpose and medium
10. Interject and redirect discussion using appropriate language and register

### Reading

#### Scope of study

Text: 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.

11. Identify the different situations when the main points are sufficient and when it is important to have specific details
12. Compare information, ideas and opinions in different texts, including how they are conveyed
13. Identify implicit and inferred meaning in texts
14. Understand the relationship between textual features and devices, and how they can be used to shape meaning for different audiences and purposes
15. Use a range of reference materials and appropriate resources (e.g. glossaries, legends/keys) for different purposes, including to find the meanings of words in straightforward and complex sources

- |  |
|--|
| 16. Understand organisational features and use them to locate relevant information in a range of straightforward and complex sources   |
| 17. Analyse texts, of different levels of complexity, recognising their use of vocabulary and identifying levels of formality and bias |
| 18. Follow an argument, identifying different points of view and distinguishing fact from opinion                                      |
| 19. Identify different styles of writing and writer's voice  |

## Writing

### Scope of study

Text: this should include straightforward and complex texts such as articles, narratives, explanations and reports of varying lengths.

### Spelling, punctuation and grammar

- |   |
|---|
| 20. Punctuate writing correctly using a wide range of punctuation markers (e.g. colons, commas, inverted commas, apostrophes and quotation marks)   |
| 21. Use correct grammar (e.g. subject-verb agreement, consistent use of a range of tenses, definite and indefinite articles) and modality devices (e.g. to express probability or desirability) |
| 22. Spell words used in work, study and daily life, including a range of specialist words   |

### Writing composition

- |  |
|--|
| 23. Communicate information, ideas and opinions clearly, coherently and effectively  |
| 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 |
| 25. Organise writing for different purposes using appropriate format and structure (e.g. standard templates, paragraphs, bullet points, tables)          |
| 26. Convey clear meaning and establish cohesion using organisational markers effectively   |
| 27. Use different language and register (e.g. persuasive techniques, supporting evidence, specialist words), suited to audience and purpose.             |
| 28. Construct complex sentences consistently and accurately, using paragraphs where appropriate  |



## **APPENDIX 2**

### **OBSERVATION OF INTERNAL ASSESSMENT RECORD SHEET**

## **NOCN Functional Skills Qualification**

### **Report on Observation of Internal Assessment**

#### **Instructions for Centres**

Centres must ensure that an IQA carries out formal observation of a sample of live SLC assessments and compiles a written report of performance for the Teachers/Tutors/Assessors. This is to ensure that the assessments, which produce no written evidence by the learner, are being conducted appropriately.

When more than one Teachers/Tutors/Assessors conducts the assessments, the observation of assessments should be spread proportionately across all Teachers/Tutors/Assessors.

Although there is no requirement to make an audio/video recording of the assessment, this may be done to further strengthen the quality assurance process.

A separate copy of this Report on Observation of Internal Assessment should be completed by the observer for each Teachers/Tutors/Assessors carrying out assessment

The report must be retained and made available for the External Quality Assurer.

**NOCN Functional Skills**

**Report on Observation of Internal Assessment**

Name of Centre	
Regional NOCN	
Functional Skill	
Functional Skill Level	
Date(s) of assessment	
Name of Tutor/Assurer	
Name of Observer	
Learners observed (names and ULNs)	
Were assessments conducted in accordance with the NOCN Functional Skills guidance?	
Do you agree with the assurer's decisions? Give details of any adjustments applied to the assurer's assessment of the performance of the learners as an outcome of this observation process (with reference to specific learners)	
Other comments or feedback to assurer	
Have you attached a list of all learners (at the same level) in this assessment cohort? (This can be a copy of the CLRF, class list or RAC.)	
Observer's signature and date	
Tutor/Assurer's signature and date	



## **NOCN**

Azero Building  
1 Concourse Way  
Sheaf Street  
Sheffield  
South Yorkshire  
England  
S1 2BJ

**Tel:** 0300 999 1177

**Email:** [nocn@nocn.org.uk](mailto:nocn@nocn.org.uk)

**[www.nocn.org.uk](http://www.nocn.org.uk)**