

# Functional Skills in Work-Based Learning

Functional Skills Support Programme

**LSIS** LEARNING AND SKILLS IMPROVEMENT SERVICE



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## Functional skills

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Functional skills are central to the government's reform of 14-19 and adult education, and the measure that the government is taking to equip the UK with the skills it needs for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

They are transferable skills that are valued by employers and by further and higher education institutions, and that provide a base from which individuals can develop other employability skills.

Functional skills in English, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT) help people to gain the most from life, learning and work. They are part of learners' statutory entitlement at secondary school, and are a compulsory component of the Diplomas, Foundation Learning and Apprenticeships.

According to the QCDA's Functional Skills Standards (2007), they are tools that enable people to:

- apply their knowledge and understanding to everyday life
- engage competently and confidently with others
- solve problems in both familiar and unfamiliar situations
- develop personally and professionally as positive citizens who can actively contribute to society

### Why functional skills are important

Functional skills qualifications are a compulsory component of the Apprenticeships, Diplomas and Foundation Learning. They will also be made available as freestanding qualifications that can be taken by both young people and adults at Entry levels 1, 2 and 3, level 1 and level 2.

### Functional skills and Apprenticeships

From September 2010, Functional Skills in English and mathematics will replace the equivalent Key Skills qualifications as a mandatory component of all Apprenticeship frameworks. Apprentices who registered before September 2010 will still be able to complete the Key Skills component until the end of August 2012.

Apprentices will be required to gain Functional Skills in English and mathematics (and ICT if required by the framework) at a minimum of level 1 for Apprenticeships and level 2 for Advanced and Higher Apprenticeships. There are no proxy qualifications for Functional Skills, but to ensure a smooth transition from Key Skills to Functional Skills, the current relaxation rule that applies for Key Skills has been extended. This means that until 2016, learners will satisfy this requirement if they have achieved, within the previous five years and before September 2012, the level of qualification required by the framework in either Key Skills (in Communication, Application of Number and/or ICT) or GCSEs, A/S levels or A levels (in English, mathematics and/or ICT).

By extending the existing relaxation rule for this limited period, the transitional arrangement gives those who might not have had the chance to take Functional Skills at Key Stage 4 the opportunity to count their Key Skills qualifications or other qualifications towards their Apprenticeship.

However, students starting Key Stage 4 after September 2010 are expected to be learning functional skills as part of the curriculum, and should therefore already have the opportunity to take Functional Skills. These students will be

required to have Functional Skills qualifications in order to achieve their Apprenticeship, since the relaxation rule, and therefore their other qualifications, will not count for them.

To promote progression, where an individual has achieved Functional Skills qualifications at level 1 in either English, mathematics or ICT (if the framework requires this), or has achieved the relevant Key Skills qualification (or one of the qualifications mentioned above) prior to starting a level 2 Apprenticeship, the employer may allow the individual to study for a Functional Skills qualification at level 2 as part of the Apprenticeship framework. The issuing authority (e.g. an SSC) must actively encourage employers to allow individuals to do this, particularly young people up to and including the age of 19.

Functional Skills are a mandatory component of the Diplomas – learners have to achieve all three Functional Skills qualifications in order to meet the requirements of their chosen Diploma. Learners studying for a Foundation Diploma must achieve all three at level 1, and learners studying for a Higher Diploma (level 2) or an Advanced Diploma (level 3) must achieve all three at level 2.

Again, there are no proxy qualifications for Functional Skills, which means that no exemptions will be awarded on the basis of individuals having previously achieved another qualification in English, mathematics or ICT.

Foundation Learning is the name given to education provision at Entry level and level 1, and to the qualifications at those levels given within the Qualifications and Credit Framework, and Functional Skills are a compulsory part of Foundation Learning programmes. From 2010, there will be clear progression routes to take students through Entry level and level 1 to a range of appropriate training.

## Work-based learning and Functional Skills

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Workplaces offer rich environments for developing, practising and applying functional English, mathematics and ICT. Both familiar and unfamiliar activities provide an endless supply of real problems, which demand functional skills as well as an ability to think critically and to work collaboratively.

Indeed, functional skills are so deeply embedded in naturally-occurring workplace activities that they can be taken for granted by those who work there and are familiar with them. This means that if learners are to capitalise on these opportunities for developing their functional skills, they may need help and guidance to recognise them in the first place. Tutors delivering functional skills can:

- highlight opportunities to develop and secure functional skills in other learning programmes (signposting) and find meaningful ways to draw them into other components of their Apprenticeship framework so that learners can develop and apply the skills in context (embedding), i.e. building in or exploiting naturally-occurring opportunities to develop functional skills in the competence-based component (e.g. NVQ) or knowledge-based component (e.g. the Technical Certificate)
- help prepare learners for the opportunities they are likely to encounter in the workplace, by emphasising the functionality, transferability and application of the knowledge and skills they develop
- discuss real-life examples from the workplace
- incorporate functional skills into learners' individual learning plans (ILP)

Workplace supervisors and mentors need to be alert to these opportunities as well, and be prepared to help work-based learners review their experiences of using their functional skills.

### Key tasks in work-based learning

The introduction of functional skills has important implications for teaching, assessment and accreditation methods. The differences between functional skills and key skills need to be understood, and as a result, those responsible for work-based learning, particularly within Apprenticeships, will need to:

- prepare to introduce functional skills across their training programmes
- review the available assessment models and decide which are the most suitable for their learners
- use appropriate initial and diagnostic assessment tools and systems
- place learners on appropriate learning programmes
- develop suitable approaches to learning and teaching, paying particular attention to the problem-solving aspects of functional skills and how these can be developed within work-based and work-related programmes
- be aware of equality, diversity and inclusion considerations, and ensure that they have had the appropriate training or staff development

The remaining sections of this booklet look at these issues in turn.

## Preparing to introduce functional skills

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When preparing to introduce functional skills, begin by reflecting on the significance of FS, both in the wider 14-19 and adult learner context and within WBL. Make a careful assessment of how likely they are to affect the ways in which learning and assessment are planned and delivered across the organisation.

### Checklist

#### *Preparing to deliver functional skills*

- Create a strategy to determine the levels learners are currently operating at in terms of their functional use of English, mathematics and ICT to help determine the extent to which their skills must be developed in order to fulfil the expectation of the overall learning programme, be it Foundation Learning or an Apprenticeship framework
  - Identify the similarities and differences between the Functional Skills Standards and the Key Skills (or SfL) specifications
  - Clarify how the outcomes at each level of functional skills learning match the learning needs of learners
  - Raise awareness of functional skills both among learners (and where appropriate among their parents/carers) and staff, employers and workplace supervisors
  - Understand functional skills progression in terms of familiarity, independence, technical demand and complexity
  - Consider the implications of functional skills for learning and teaching in the context of work-based learning programmes, paying particular attention to the emphasis on problem-solving in real situations
  - Plan to create learning opportunities and challenges that encourage learners to develop their ability to:
    - a) handle increasing levels of complexity and demand
    - b) use their skills in a range of contexts and learning scenarios
    - c) take increasing responsibility for how they approach their work
    - d) tackle problems in unfamiliar scenarios with confidence
- Appraise the different approaches to the assessment of functional skills made available by the awarding organisations
  - Establish how functional skills delivery will build upon the experience of key skills and/or SfL
  - Plan delivery of functional skills within the frameworks of all offered work-based learning programmes
  - Identify the teaching/learning resources (including staffing) needed to deliver functional skills
  - Clarify how progression in Apprenticeships and Diplomas will be linked to progression in functional skills
  - Be clear about the equality, diversity and inclusion requirements and the extent to which these are addressed by the various awarding organisations in their qualification and assessment arrangements
  - Liaise with employers to explain functional skills, and work with them to set up the infrastructures required for their successful delivery

It will be especially important to prepare staff within the organisation, employers and workplace supervisors.

### Preparing staff within the organisation

The introduction of functional skills will undoubtedly require a substantial investment in raising awareness, and training and developing staff, including the use of mentoring and other continuing professional development (CPD) initiatives.

- Explain the philosophy and rationale underpinning functional skills and the principles on which their assessment is based
- Provide training in functional skills delivery, in particular with teaching and learning methods
- Encourage teamwork between vocational specialists and colleagues with specialist expertise in Functional English, mathematics and ICT
- Audit the existing FS expertise and/or awareness of staff
- Ensure that staff are fully aware of the equality, diversity and inclusion considerations for teaching, learning and assessment

#### Checklist

#### Workforce issues

In order to tackle workforce issues associated with introducing functional skills into work-based learning:

- Attend Functional Skills Support Programme (FSSP) events and cascade the outcomes to colleagues at staff meetings via briefing papers, one-to-one meetings and feedback on peer observation of training sessions. (For more information, visit [www.fssupport.org](http://www.fssupport.org))
- Identify any staff development needs that will have to be addressed including training associated with inclusion, equality and diversity
- Develop a CPD strategy to include cascading and mentoring

- Organise functional skills training days and sessions
- Develop delivery strategies and resources during training events with staff and workplace supervisors
- Train those members of staff with responsibility for functional English, mathematics and ICT in the methods that will help them to deliver them effectively
- Encourage collaboration between functional skills specialists, vocational tutors and workplace supervisors
- Provide support for the delivery of functional skills through coaching and mentoring
- Keep all staff, including vocational specialists and workplace supervisors, fully informed about developments
- Designate 'functional skills champions' from among vocational tutors and workplace supervisors
- Use newsletters and websites to promote functional skills to all key stakeholders

### Preparing employers and workplace supervisors

One of the biggest challenges is to enable workplace supervisors and mentors to link learners' on-the-job experiences and achievements to the functional skills learning requirements. It is very important therefore, to engage with employers, workplace supervisors and mentors at the earliest opportunity in order to explain:

- what functional skills are and how they will benefit learners and employers
- why they have become a compulsory component of Apprenticeships, Diplomas and Foundation Learning
- how they are assessed
- how they can support learners as they develop, practise and apply their skills

## Planning for the introduction of the Functional Skills qualification

### Case Study - South-West Durham Training Ltd.

South-West Durham Training Ltd. (SWDT) provides training facilities for Manufacturing and Engineering companies across the region. It offers Apprenticeships and other forms of training in occupational areas that include Engineering, Business & Administration, and Customer Service. The main focus is on Apprenticeships (for 16-24-year-olds) and the centre currently delivers training to approximately 300 learners who are following Apprenticeship pathways. Training is delivered by 20 members of staff, and the centre uses four main awarding organisations.

The organisation started piloting Functional Skills in 2008/9 with eight apprentices in the Business & Administration programme. Based on the lessons learnt from this pilot, it is rolling out functional skills across all Apprenticeships and Advanced Apprenticeships. The majority of Business & Administration learners have always needed to complete the Key Skills qualifications as part of their Apprenticeships; however, these have traditionally been delivered in isolation from the main programme.

Although vocational tutors have assisted in developing the learners' key skills, the main underpinning knowledge has come from the specialist Skills for Life (SfL) team. As functional skills are now a key component of the overall framework, vocational tutors need to collaborate more fully by allowing time and providing opportunities for their learners to practise and develop them.

Given the full implementation of functional skills in September 2010, the biggest challenge will be to have functional skills delivered effectively in all the training offered by the centre, including that which occurs in the workplace. They need to ensure that all staff and employers are not only aware of functional skills, but are also able to play their part in their effective

implementation across all Apprenticeships. The centre plans to liaise with employers via existing mechanisms: regular meetings with supervisors, the website, seminars and briefings. With the centre's own staff, the main challenge is to help vocational tutors get to know the functional skills, advocate them to sceptical learners, adopt new teaching approaches and become familiar with different forms of assessment.

### Initial Assessment

Initial and diagnostic assessment help to build a clear picture of each learner's achievements, skills, interests, goals, strengths and learning needs. Many learners come to work-based learning having had a mixed or even negative experience of past encounters with qualifications in English, mathematics and ICT. As a result, many come with very spiky profiles within and across these three subject areas. This means that it is very important for WBL trainers and teachers to be extremely clear about what the starting points may be for these learners.

A robust initial assessment system will include a variety of tools that are relevant to learners and their programmes. Above all, initial assessment should be a positive experience for learners. The Initial Assessment Toolkit (KSSP, 2007) provides a range of practical tools that can be readily adapted.

The information derived from the initial assessment process will form the basis for each learner's individual learning plan (ILP). Once formulated, ILPs should be continually reviewed and amended in the light of work with the learners and formative assessment of their progress.

As learners develop the skills, it makes sense to build in opportunities for them to practise tasks similar to those they will encounter in their functional skills assessments. Feedback from those tasks can then be used to inform future teaching and learning and to ensure that learners are entered at the appropriate level.

*Checklist*  
*Initial assessment*

- Review existing initial assessment tools and methods to assess their relevance to functional English, mathematics and ICT
- Review the tools available online to assess which may be relevant to learners
- Use networks of professional contacts to find out about the initial assessment methods used by other centres, especially work-based learning providers
- Work with colleagues to establish the suitability of different tools for your learners and programmes
- Develop professional competence in initial assessment as part of CPD activity
- Use the outcomes of initial assessment to negotiate with each learner an ILP that includes the individual functional skills
- Review ILPs in the light of feedback on progress, including learner performance in tasks based on those used to assess functional English, mathematics and ICT

## Delivering functional skills

Being 'functional' means that the skills learners acquire can be used in a wide variety of situations. In the WBL context, this means that they can use English, mathematics and ICT skills to solve a variety of problems that occur in the workplace. Learners will develop the ability to be aware of the skills available to them and have a broad understanding of how to use them in practical ways.

Delivery should be based on a practical problem-solving approach, which involves learners:

- working co-operatively
- applying critical thinking
- using, developing and applying what they have learned to solve real problems

Making use of authentic tasks drawn from real life situations is an essential part of learners becoming 'functional' (and will help them appreciate the importance of this), and should be extremely straightforward in work-based learning.

Learners also need tutors, coaches and mentors to encourage and support them to develop problem-solving strategies using the process of 'plan, do and review'. This can be applied to all areas of learning, support the transferability of skills and help embed personal learning and thinking skills (PLTS).

Learning of this kind is best supported by methods of assessment that emphasise assessment *for* learning rather than simply assessment *of* learning, and that draw on a broad and rich evidence base. Learners need regular feedback on the effectiveness of their learning, which can be used formatively to improve their future learning and performance and to be involved through peer and self assessment.

### The difference between delivering functional skills and key skills

#### Case Study - South-West Durham Training Ltd.

South-West Durham Training Ltd. believes that in order to achieve the intended learning outcomes of functional skills, learners must be challenged to acquire new ways of thinking and doing, and be supported throughout that process. The emphasis is on developing a deeper understanding and an ability to apply and transfer what has been learned in one context in order to solve problems in another, especially the workplace.

This change calls for an approach to the delivery of the curriculum and to assessment that differs from the 'teaching as opposed to training' method used with Key Skills.

The centre's vocational specialists and workplace supervisors may find it particularly difficult at first to make the necessary changes, and will themselves need training and the help and support of their SfL colleagues. However, the wider benefits are likely to include the enhanced ability of learners to apply functional approaches both to their experiences in the workplace and to their own ongoing personal development.

#### Embedding functional skills

Functional skills are about application, so embedding them within real tasks – especially at work – is essential. Experience delivering key skills and the functional skills pilot suggests that the most effective approaches to teaching and learning functional skills involve at least some degree of embedding within the wider learning programme.

Embedding functional skills apprentices’ across programmes will provide opportunities for them to develop and apply functional skills at work, thus adding meaning and purpose to their learning.

They will find that:

- improving their functional skills helps them to do better in the rest of their programme
- the skills they develop are transferable to many different situations, and as they become more aware of what these skills are, they will learn to practise them in other situations in their lives outside the workplace and be conscious that they are doing so

**Delivery models**

Providers of work-based learning will seek to deliver functional skills through a combination of specialist English, mathematics and ICT classes, vocational teaching and the workplace.

Each organisation needs to consider the different delivery models and decide which is/ are appropriate to their work-based learning programmes and contexts. It is likely that a changing mix of these models may be needed for most learners at different stages of their learning journey.

It is helpful to think in terms of four possible approaches to embedding functional skills into programmes of develop learning including Apprenticeships:

Discrete	Partly embedded	Mostly embedded	Fully embedded
<i>Functional skills are taught by specialists separately from other learning contexts</i>	<i>Functional skills are taught by specialists and are flexibly applied in a range of learning contexts</i>	<i>Functional skills are taught by specialists and are reinforced and applied in a range of purposeful learning contexts</i>	<i>Functional skills are taught, developed and applied in a variety of contexts by all those who contribute to the delivery of learning experiences. Learners recognise and use naturally-occurring opportunities for functional skills development</i>

**Teamwork**

Embedding functional skills will involve collaboration between specialist staff, vocational tutors and workplace supervisors and mentors. Functionality refers to the ability of the learners to show that they can use these skills in all aspects of their learning programme. This will mean that all staff involved with the learners will need to have a working understanding of the functional skills and their different levels so that they can communicate effectively about the learners’ changing needs at different stages of their programme.

*Checklist  
Delivering functional skills*

**Collaboration:**

- Discuss and agree roles for specialist staff, vocational tutors and workplace supervisors and mentors
- Make functional skills explicit from the start, stress their value and vocational relevance and show learners how they link to their overall programme

**Plan learning:**

- Develop a framework of planned learning with an appropriate blend of on-job, near-job and off-job learning
- Ensure that any discrete, off-job learning is relevant to learners and make clear the links with their work
- Liaise with vocational tutors and workplace supervisors in order to identify where functional skills can be applied in the workplace
- Help learners to recognise and capitalise on opportunities for learning that arise in their work, as and when they occur
- Promote and support staff development through discussion of, and reflection on the practical issues surrounding the effective delivery of functional skills
- Consolidate relationships with AOs and become more familiar with their assessment requirements

**Embedding functional skills in work-based learning****Case Study - S&S Training Ltd.**

S&S Training Ltd. is a private training provider based in Huddersfield. It offers a range of Apprenticeships including those in: Business & Administration, Contact Centre Operations, Customer Service, IT, Manufacturing, and Storage & Warehousing. The organisation has been preparing for the transition from key skills to functional skills in Apprenticeship frameworks by piloting functional skills with relatively small numbers of learners including some of its apprentices.

The centre does not envisage any problems in relation to embedding functional skills because tutors and workplace supervisors will be able to build on their experiences of contextualising key skills. Nonetheless, it recognises that the delivery of functional skills will offer new challenges in comparison with key skills. In particular, preparing learners for the functional skills assessments will be rather different, and tutors will need to teach learners problem-solving skills and the ability to recognise and apply them.

**Resources:**

- Establish how existing resources such as those used for key skills can be adapted for functional skills
- Continue to build up the resources needed for the effective delivery of functional skills across all of the work-based learning programmes on offer
- Set up a resource bank and try out resources for use in delivering functional skills

**Review and reflection:**

- Use feedback from learners, staff and workplace supervisors to refine the methods used to deliver functional skills
- Provide additional support for learners who experience difficulty with functional skills

**CPD:**

- Provide practical advice and support to all involved – specialist staff, vocational tutors and workplace supervisors and mentors

## Embedding functional skills

### Case Study - Milltech Training Ltd.

The centre plans to develop an 'integrated' as opposed to 'bolt-on' model of delivery. The Functional Skills Lead (FSL) will support the vocational staff and workplace supervisors in the delivery of functional skills by:

- providing specialist functional skills inputs on training days
- helping vocational staff to recognise and capitalise on opportunities for developing functional English, mathematics and ICT – both in the training sessions they deliver and in the workplace – by means of joint curriculum mapping/planning exercises

Recent experience with learners on Advanced Apprenticeships in Business & Administration suggests that they will respond positively to functional skills exercises that have clear vocational relevance. Examples include:

- functional mathematics related to some typical expense claims
- effective reading skills applied to office documents

The expectation is that delivering functional skills in an integrated way will enhance learner motivation, and that new skills will increase learners' self-confidence and competence in the workplace.

## Assessment models and choice of awarding organisations

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### How functional skills are assessed

The Functional Skills qualifications in English, mathematics and ICT at Entry levels 1, 2 and 3, and levels 1 and 2 are defined by the Functional Skills Standards produced by QCDA. They are assessed as discrete levels, which means that a marginal fail at level 2 does not result in a pass at level 1.

Assessment approaches and arrangements vary between awarding organisations, and some AO assessment models may be more suitable for certain learners than others.

Unlike for Key Skills, learners taking Functional Skills qualifications will not have to submit a portfolio for assessment purposes – though there may still be teaching and learning benefits in encouraging learners to build up a portfolio of work along with the feedback they have received.

The Functional Skills Qualification Criteria (November 2009, Ofqual) states that at Entry levels 1, 2 and 3, assessment must be externally specified by the awarding organisation and must be internally marked, except in the case of e-assessment where electronic marking is required (point 22), and that at levels 1 and 2, assessment must be both set and marked externally by the awarding organisation (point 23).

### The assessment models

The assessment models for functional skills are significantly different from those used to assess key skills. Following the Functional Skills pilot, different awarding organisations have developed distinct approaches to assessing functional skills. It is important to understand how they differ from each other and how appropriate they are for particular work-based learning programmes.

There is a comparison of the arrangements at <http://testsandexams.qcda.gov.uk/25486.aspx>.

Assessment models across the awarding organisations are all similar in that they must provide realistic contexts and scenarios; specify tasks that are relevant to the context; require application of knowledge, skills and understanding for a purpose and require problem solving. The assessments will also look to determine how secure the learner's skills are across different contexts.

Centres are able to select between the different assessment models on offer by the different awarding organisations and may select which ones are best for their learners in each FS area and at each level.

### Inclusion

Awarding organisations have been asked to ensure that their specifications and assessment materials provide fair and equal access and are inclusive. To do this, they provide 'reasonable adjustments' to ensure that candidates with disabilities can access assessment. Each centre's own staff must be clear about the equality, diversity and social inclusion issues that may exist and the mechanisms available to help respond to them.

## Choosing an awarding organisation for functional skills

### Case Study - Milltech Ltd.

Milltech Ltd. (Sunderland) is a private training provider offering a range of Apprenticeships including those in Business & Administration, Information Technology, Motor Vehicle Technicians and Customer Services. It provides:

- work placements where their apprentices gain practical experience
- training on a day release basis
- workplace assessment for the NVQ
- training for workplace supervisors

Foundation apprentices involved in the Functional Skills pilot take an NVQ, a Technical Certificate and functional English at level 2, and functional mathematics at level 1. Advanced Apprenticeships require an NVQ and a Technical Certificate at level 3.

Milltech compared the different awarding organisations and their assessment models and administrative arrangements. They felt that some AOs catered better for the needs of schools and colleges than for a small work-based learning provider. Subtle differences in the timing of the assessments and in the 'culture' of the AOs (e.g. seeming to be 'academic as opposed to vocational' and having a tradition of 'moderating centre-based assessments as opposed to verifying them') were important considerations.

After due consideration, they chose an awarding organisation (AO) which provided 'the best fit' for their selection criteria:

- they had worked with it previously and had every confidence in it

- they had established a personal link with the it
- they liked the flexibility it offered, particularly the facility for doing assessments on-line when the learners were ready, rather than having to wait for an 'assessment window'
- they piloted the on-line assessment with a sample of learners who found it to be extremely user friendly

### Checklist

#### Criteria for selecting an awarding organisation (AO)

- Is 'on demand' assessment available? If not, do AOs offer sufficient assessment windows to accommodate the needs and circumstances of your learners?
- Are on-line assessments and/or paper-based assessments available?
- How much experience does the AO have of dealing with work-based learners?
- Is the language used within exemplar assessment materials at the right level for the learners?
- Will learners find the scenarios realistic and meaningful?
- Are the information, resources and support relevant to work-based learning?
- What is the balance between external and internal assessment?
- Which assessment model(s) best meets the needs of your learners?
- How quickly will the AO turn round results?
- How do the AOs compare in terms of their costs?

- What impact are the AO's internal assessment procedures and requirements likely to have on staff workloads?
- How manageable is the whole assessment package for your staff and centre?
- Are the reasonable adjustments that the AO offers likely to meet the needs of all the learners who would require them?
- Are the assessment procedures and processes suitably inclusive and free of any equality and diversity concerns?

Work-based learning providers are well placed to adapt and respond to the challenges and opportunities that result from the introduction of functional skills. Much of the good work done around embedding key skills learning in Apprenticeship frameworks can be carried forward as the basis for a learning approach to functional skills. However, it is vital to understand the differences between key and functional skills along with the changes that will need to be made.

Functional skills also offer a range of new and different opportunities, including greater choice of assessment approaches across awarding organisations, and work-based learning providers should be able to take advantage of these new opportunities.

## Resources to support functional skills

**The Functional Skills Support Programme has a range of resources available on [www.fssupport.org](http://www.fssupport.org), including:**

**Managing delivery of functional skills (LSIS, 2008)**

**Teaching and learning functional mathematics (LSIS, 2008)**

**Teaching and learning functional English (LSIS, 2008)**

**Teaching and learning functional ICT (LSIS, 2008)**

## FAQs

**Does every activity have to cover all three functional skills?**

No. Learners should be given as many opportunities as possible to practise their functional skills in realistic contexts. These may include one, two or all three of the functional skills.

**How can employers support learners of functional skills?**

It is very helpful to obtain statements from local employers that confirm the importance of functional skills. Employers may be willing to supply data or to take part in discussions.

**Do learners have to produce a functional skills portfolio?**

Assessment of functional skills will be the responsibility of the awarding organisations within the parameters set by QCDA. At levels 1 and 2, assessment will usually be through timed tasks. There will be no portfolio assessment requirements. However, such assessment may prove to be a useful teaching and learning aid. Centres should contact their awarding organisations in all matters relating to assessment.

**Can learners retake their functional skills assessments?**

Yes. Although learners should not be entered for a functional skills assessment until they are ready, they can retake it as many times as necessary. Details are available from your awarding organisation.

See also <http://qca.custhelp.com>.

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## About the Functional Skills Support Programme (FSSP)

The FSSP is jointly managed by the Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS) and the National Strategies (Secondary), on behalf of the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) and the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS). The FSSP is designed to fully prepare practitioners, leaders and managers to support functional skills delivery, from developing applied learning to adopting a whole-organisation approach to functional skills implementation.

The FSSP is available free of charge to all schools and post-16 education and training centres. Post-16 support covers colleges, sixth-form colleges and independent training organisations, as well as the secure estate and adult and community settings. For more information about the programme and for contact information, please visit [www.fssupport.org](http://www.fssupport.org).

## Learning and Skills Improvement Service

The Learning and Skills Improvement Service aims to accelerate the drive for excellence in the learning and skills sector, building the sector's own capacity to design, commission and deliver improvement and strategic change. This will help realise our vision that every learner acquires the skills, knowledge and appetite for learning, living and working and that every provider is valued by their community and employers for their contribution to sustainable social and economic priorities.

*Strategic Ambitions*, which we published in July 2009, demonstrates how we will contribute to delivering core improvement principles and sets out our new ways of working to engage the sector in everything we do to make LSIS a truly sector-led organisation. You can find this document and other information about LSIS activities and services at [www.lsis.org.uk](http://www.lsis.org.uk).

## Disability equality policy

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