



# **Essential Skills Qualifications Criteria**

## **Communication and Application of Number**

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# The criteria

## Introduction

1. The following criteria will be used as the basis for the development and accreditation of Essential Skills qualifications in Communication and Application of Number.

## Content

### Titling

2. Essential Skills qualifications at Levels 1 and 2 must be titled as follows:
  - AO Level (1 or 2) Certificate in Essential Skills - Communication
  - AO Level (1 or 2) Certificate in Essential Skills - Application of Number

## Qualification Type

3. Essential Skills in Communication and Application of Number at Levels 1 and 2 must be classified as 'Other General' qualification type.

## Qualification Size

4. The qualifications will consist of 45 guided learning hours (to be known as Guided Learning) and 60 hours Total Qualification Time (TQT).

## Subject matter of essential skills

5. Essential Skills are the fundamental applied skills which help people to gain the most from life, learning and work.
6. Essential Skills subject criteria for Communication and Application of Number specify the skills standards, coverage and range for the qualifications at each level.

## Assessment

7. Assessments may sample from the coverage and range within the Essential Skills qualifications. Awarding organisations must be able to demonstrate that any sampling of the coverage and range over time does not undermine the qualification as a measure of functionality at the level nor make sampled assessment content predictable. This must be supported by an assessment specification that details the awarding organisation approach to sampling for each assessment over time. Coverage of the complete range should be within a 3 – 4 paper cycle.
8. Assessment must be consistent with the levels set out in the skills standards and with the associated coverage and range specified within the Essential Skills subject criteria. In addition, it must:
  - 8.1 provide realistic contexts, scenarios and problems;
  - 8.2 specify tasks that are relevant to the context;

- 8.3 require application of knowledge, skills and understanding for a purpose;
  - 8.4 require problem solving;
  - 8.5 assess process skills and the outcome of their application in different contexts.
9. The level of difficulty for Essential Skills assessment must be determined by the following interacting factors:
- 9.1 the complexity of tasks/problems and the contexts within which they are embedded;
  - 9.2 the technical demand of the content that might be applied in these contexts;
  - 9.3 a learner's level of familiarity with the type of task/problem and context;
  - 9.4 the level of independence required of the learner.
10. Assessment must be designed to assess a single level. The assessment must provide a reliable measure of proficiency at that level by providing significant evidence of meeting the requirements of the essential skills subject criteria at the specified level. The assessment must comply with the skill standards at a specific level and not include additional requirements.
11. Assessment must be entirely open response or predominantly open response. The Essential Skills subject criteria for Communication and Application of Number specify the maximum proportion of fixed-response assessment permitted for the assessment of each qualification.
- 11.1 Open response assessment is defined as task-based assessment based on real-life contexts that require learners to apply their skills, knowledge and understanding in order to resolve problem/s or produce effective outcome/s
  - 11.2 Open response assessment presents purposeful tasks and problems, embedded in realistic scenarios but does not prescribe the processes or the methods by which the learner responds
  - 11.3 Fixed response assessment is defined as assessment that presents items where the learner is confined to either a single or limited number of correct responses predetermined by the assessment, and where process is not explicitly credited.
  - 11.4 Fixed response assessment must focus on the assessment of understanding and knowledge for a purpose.

12. All Awarding Organisations (AOs) offering these qualifications will cooperate and collaborate to develop assessments which will be subject to standardisation by regulators and all AOs offering these qualifications. AOs can develop assessments in a format, style and frequency to suit their learners.
13. In assessments, the inclusion of any ICT elements must not interfere with the assessment of the primary skill.
14. In assessments, other than those relating to Essential Skills Application of Number qualifications, the inclusion of any numerical elements must not interfere with the assessment of the primary skill.
15. In assessments, other than those relating to Essential Skills Communication, the language used must be accessible to learners operating at least a level below the primary focus of assessment content.
16. Assessment specifications and mark schemes must show how the assessments relate to the requirements of the Essential Skills subject criteria for Communication and Application of Number.
17. Assessment must be mark based, with the exception of the speaking and listening component in Communication.
18. Assessment must indicate the level of detail required and display the number of marks available per assessment item/task. Mark schemes must specify the performance evidence that is necessary to display the full range of marks.

#### **External and internal assessment**

19. Levels 1 and 2 Communication in speaking and listening are assessed by controlled assessment and must comply with the Essential Skills controlled assessment requirements.
20. At levels 1 and 2, assessment must be externally set by the awarding organisation and externally marked by the awarding organisation, with the exception of the speaking, listening and communication components of Essential Skills Communication.
21. Awarding Organisations must ensure that they have procedures to ensure flexible and timely availability of external assessment components.

#### **Certification and Reporting**

22. Where a learner's performance is sufficient to meet the level requirements, an Essential Skills qualification pass certificate is awarded. No grades are issued for these qualifications.