

Functional Skills

Functional Skills Newsletter - May 2009

Welcome to May's edition of the Functional Skills newsletter. With over 800 registered pilot centres, and the largest Development Programme available, our Functional Skills qualifications are proving to be increasingly popular for centres and their students.

The last few months have also provided a number of discussion points with the removal of the GCSE hurdle, our new Entry Level and Onscreen pilots and the announcement of the exceptional award. We hope you find the following updates useful and as always we appreciate your feedback.

From The Functional Skills Team – fsdevelopment@edexcel.com

With over 70,000 entries across subjects for this summer's series our Functional Skills pilot is more popular than ever.

Datafiles now available for Functional ICT

Datafiles for our ICT examinations have now been released and can be accessed at: www.edexcel.com/quals/func-skills/ict/Pages/Documents.aspx

You will need your Edexcel Online username and password to access the secure content datafiles.

Three steps to help you prepare for summer assessments

1. Use our free teaching materials to help prepare your students

Comprehensive teaching materials can be found on our Functional subject pages. These have been written by expert staff and include practice tests and past papers so that your students are familiar with the style of the test.

2. Read the examiner's reports for more advice and insight.

Examiners reports for the June 2008 and January 2009 tests are available on the subject documents pages. These reports highlight the issues that went well and, in some cases, not quite so well for some students. *It is also important to remind students about the importance of managing their time in the exam in order to complete all the tasks.*

3. Use our free training materials to help you prepare

We've been running training events and web-based seminars to support you in preparing your students for assessment. You can download your presentations from the relevant subject page at www.edexcel.com/fs

The GCSE hurdle...

Undoubtedly, you would have heard the recent announcement made by the Rt Hon Jim Knight, the Minister of State for Schools and Learners, that the proposed hurdle for Functional Skills within GCSE English, Mathematics and ICT for 2010 is to be removed. This means that students will no longer have to pass Level 2 Functional Skills in order to achieve a grade C or above for these core GCSE subjects.

Whilst the minister has written to say that, "we accept that we should not make a link between the functional skills assessments and the GCSE" they are keen that students continue with Functional Skills assessments, "so that they can demonstrate success in learning these vital skills."

With information pending on how incentives may be offered for centres offering Functional Skills, we are continuing to support centres with implementation for the duration of the pilot and as it moves on to its live phase in 2010.

Further information can be found on our list of recently published [Frequently Asked Questions](#) on our notice board.

Upcoming dates for the diary - summer assessments

Functional English Reading Level 1 (FE112)
Monday 11th May PM

Functional English Writing Level 1 (FE103)
Monday 11th May PM

Functional English Reading Level 2 (FE212)
Monday 11th May PM

Functional English Writing Level 2 (FE203)
Monday 11th May PM

Functional Mathematics Level 1 (FM101)
Friday 15th May PM

Functional Mathematics Level 1 (FM102)
Friday 15th May PM

Functional ICT Level 1 Window (FT101)
Monday 18th May AM – Friday 22nd May PM

Functional ICT Level 1 Window (FT102)
Monday 18th May AM – Friday 22nd May PM

Entry Level Registration Live!

Registration for Entry Level Functional Skills is now open, and **on-demand assessments** will be available from May 2009. For more information please contact fspilot.recruitment@edexcel.com

You can now find a section dedicated to 'Entry Level' on the left hand menu at www.edexcel.com/fs where you will find draft sample assessments, specifications and additional information.

Onscreen – our new Functional Skills pilot goes 21st century

Registration for our new onscreen pilot is live. Designed with flexibility for centres and learners, it offers onscreen assessment and internally assessed papers, facilitating a faster turnaround of results and moving further towards assessment 'on demand'. Registration is now open and is FREE to centres that fulfil the criteria. First assessment is planned to take place in June. This onscreen pilot will operate alongside the mainstream Functional Skills pilot, and will be available to a limited number of centres this year.

To become an onscreen pilot centre you need to fulfil the following criteria:

- each learner in the Pilot Cohort must be taking Level 1 or Level 2 Adult Literacy or Numeracy qualifications with Edexcel.
- pilot learners can be 19+ years old, and in full or part time education.

OR

- aged 16-19 and in part-time education only.

If you wish to join this pilot or require further information please email our team at FSOnscreen@edexcel.com or call 0207 190 4347.

Recognising attainment - Exceptional awards at Level 1

We are pleased to announce that for the period of the pilot, we are now able to award a pass at Level 1 for candidates that fall below the threshold for a pass on a Level 2 paper.

These awards will be made where a candidate's performance falls just below the pass boundary but still provides adequate coverage of the standards required for Level 1.

For a detailed breakdown of how these marks are awarded please see the announcement on our Functional Skills notice board.

We're listening to you - Survey feedback

Thank you to the pilot centres who completed our survey last month, your responses were a huge help to us in developing qualification and support materials that meet your needs.

The good news: We are on the right tracks in terms of support. You've told us that our newsletter is one of the most popular resources for being kept up to date, and that the majority of you find our current resource packs and training events comprehensive and useful. As we're working to develop these packs even further, these materials will become a central resource for all your teaching requirements. We will also be posting some new training podcasts taken of our recent seminars so you can train or refresh at a time that suits you from the comfort of your desk. Look out online for further details.

Developments: We also know that there are areas in which we need to improve to help you feel confident delivering our specifications – further resources are a must, as are more assessment windows and enhanced support. But don't worry - improvements are already underway in these areas. Our publishing colleagues are working closely with us to produce new materials and we're ensuring that our website is as up to date as possible to keep you informed.

Congratulations to the winner of our digital camera from Eastlea Community School.

Are you eligible to join this September?

Centre eligibility from September has now been updated and centres wishing to join the pilot in the third year will have to meet one or more of the following criteria:

- existing centres from the first and second year of the pilot
- centres registering learners for the Diploma from September 2009
- centres that will be offering the Advanced Diploma in September 2010
- centres participating in the Foundation Learning Tier (FLT) pilot
- a further education college or training provider that can offer apprenticeship learners
- centre/provider with contracts offering learning in the custodial sector or probation service
- centre/provider of adult education

If your centre meets these criteria, and you are interested in joining the pilot you can register via our online form www.edexcel.com/fs-ito

Don't forget if you're not yet eligible to join you can become part of our growing **Development Programme** of over 3,200 registered contacts, we can then keep you up to date with the important developments.

Case studies – Show off your centre's functionality

We're always looking to work more closely with our pilot centres to provide examples of best practice so that we can support you through the developments. We're happy to talk to you on the phone, by email or even make a visit to find out about your experiences. If you are interested in taking part you can contact us at fsdevelopment@edexcel.com

QCA – Functional Skills 'lessons learnt'

QCA has produced a comprehensive case study brochure based on their recent Functional Skills evaluation events that were held last month. The brochure contains ten case studies focusing on a mixture of schools and colleges who are using different methods of integration to prepare staff and students for Functional Skills.

It is a useful document that provides a personalised view of centre experiences of the Functional Skills pilot, as well as providing words of advice for new centres based on the lessons they themselves have learned. [A copy of the brochure can be found on QCA's website www.qca.org.uk](http://www.qca.org.uk) - simply search for 'Functional Skills lessons learnt'.

What Functional Skills means to Apprenticeships

In 2010 Functional Skills will replace Key Skills within the new Apprenticeships.

Currently eight Sector Skills councils (SSCs) and some Standard Setting Bodies (SSBs) have amended their Apprenticeship framework to allow learners to pilot Functional Skills. This means that learners undertaking apprenticeships could choose either Functional Skills or Key Skills. Learners who take the FS route will not have to submit a portfolio but will have to undertake a speaking & listening and writing assessment.

The organisations who have amended apprenticeships currently are:

- Construction Skills - construction
- ICS (an SSB) - customer service
- SEMTA - engineering
- SkillsActive - sporting excellence
- Skills for Health - health and social care, dental assistants, pharmacy
- Skillsmart Retail - retail CfA (an SSB) - business and administration
- Skills for Logistics - carry and deliver goods, warehouse and storage
- E-Skills - IT and telecoms professionals, IT user
- TDA (SSB)- supporting teaching and learning in schools
- Government skills

If you are interested in finding out more about our pilot and what is suitable for your learners please email fsdevelopment@edexcel.com

Key contacts

If you have any queries regarding Functional Skills don't forget you can email our *Ask the Expert service* on one of the follow subject emails:

Functionalskillsenglish@edexcel.com

Functionalskillsmaths@edexcel.com

Functionalskillsict@edexcel.com

Our inbox is also open for further information and registration details
fsdevelopment@edexcel.com

GCSE 2010 – Book a FREE place on our subject launch events

Our GCSE 2010 website is now live. We have individual subject pages for [English10](http://www.english10.co.uk) - www.maths10.co.uk and [ICT10](http://www.ict10.co.uk) - www.ict10.co.uk so that you can sign up for the subject specific information you need.

Launch events dates for all subjects are now live – our FREE face to face English, Maths and ICT events will provide you with the chance to find out what's happening for 2010 and how we will be supporting you. You can secure your place at www.edexcel.com/trainingbookings

If you think any of your colleagues would be interested in our newsletter, please pass this on or email us at the address above and we'll add their details to our list.

We would love to hear what you think of our enewsletter; the things you love, would like to see more of, or the areas that you want to know more about. Email us at fsdevelopment@edexcel.com to let us know!

A PEARSON COMPANY