



# Instructions for the Conduct of Controlled Assessment

Essential Digital Skills Qualifications (EDSQ)

Entry Level and Level 1

2025 to 2026

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# Introduction

This document should be read in conjunction with the current version of the [JCQ Instructions for Conducting Examinations \(ICE\)](#) and the [Essential Digital Skills Centre guide to Quality Assurance](#). This document contains requirements that are in addition to the criterion included in the JCQ ICE document.

For the purpose of this document, the Head of Centre, Principal of the College or the Chief Officer is the named person who takes ultimate responsibility for quality assurance within the centre and will be referred to as 'Head of Centre' throughout the document.

All centres **must** have relevant approval from Pearson before offering the Essential Digital Skills Qualification (EDSQ). This can be clarified by contacting the Approval Team using the [Pearson Support Portal](#).

The Head of Centre is responsible for ensuring the proper conduct of the assessments for EDSQ, although they may delegate certain tasks as necessary. Please contact us if a situation arises that is not covered by this document. Contact details can be found [on our website](#).

This document covers the conduct of the controlled assessments for EDSQ.

The assessments are graded as either 'pass' or 'fail', however, centres **must** refer to the Assessor Guidance and accompanying mark schemes when marking controlled assessments and for the set pass mark for each component. Please refer to the deadlines set out in the EDSQ Year Planner and ensure assessments are completed and marked in time to allow for Standards Verification to be completed by 31<sup>st</sup> July. Assessments should ideally be completed by early July at latest to accommodate these deadlines. The EDSQ controlled assessment documents can be accessed via the [Secure Tests area of our website](#).

Assessors **must** have access to the Assessor Guidance corresponding to each assessment in advance of each assessment to allow particular arrangements for each assessment to be accommodated in time. Assessments can be held on any date suitable to your centre. There are no requirements for centres to inform Pearson of the arranged assessment date beforehand. However, to access the live assessment materials for EDSQ, centres should register learners for the qualification a minimum of 3 weeks before the scheduled assessment date.

**Please note:** Only authorised personnel such as the Examinations Officer(s) and Examinations Assistant(s) have appropriate access to download live materials from the secure site.

Centres are allocated a Standards Verifier as soon as registrations are made by the centre. The Standards Verifier will then make contact with the centre. Any correspondence relating to the assessments should be addressed directly to your allocated Standards Verifier unless otherwise instructed by Pearson.

## Safe custody of assessment papers and other materials

The live assessment materials for EDSQ can be accessed, once learner registrations have been made, via the [Secure Tests area of our website](#).

Only the Examinations Officer and Examinations Assistants (as allocated per role on Edexcel Online) have access to the live materials (gold padlocked). Live assessment materials can be downloaded a **maximum of 2 weeks before** the assessment takes place. Centres **must** download the materials each time an assessment is scheduled to ensure the most up to date materials are used.

Live controlled assessment tests materials include:

For Entry Level	For Level 1
Question paper	Question paper
Task	Task
Task data files	Task data files
Observation	Mark Scheme and Assessment Record
Mark Scheme and Assessment Record	Assessor Guidance
Question paper	

These materials **must** be checked carefully once accessed, and Pearson notified immediately if there are any problems or if the assessments cannot be accessed. Refer to the Appendix section at the end of this document for a full list of Pearson contact details.

**Please note:** Controlled assessment queries, i.e. the content of the live assessment materials, **must not** be emailed as the content is **secure** and emailing any part of it is considered a **breach of security**. If you have a query about the content of the controlled assessment, please [contact us](#).

When submitting a case, complete the webform as follows:

Tell us about your issue

\*What kind of customer are you?

Exams Officers

Centre Number

9999

\*Issue Type

Feedback

\*Category Type

Qualifications

\*Subcategory Type

Specification

\*Qualification

Essential Digital Skills Qualification

\*Qualification Subject

Entry

You will also be prompted to select a qualification and describe what your query relates to on the webform so the relevant team can respond to the query.

Please **do not** include any live question paper text on this form, instead signpost where the error occurs by using the page number, question number, line number or any other identifiable information and we will investigate further. Alternatively, you can call customer services to discuss this over the phone.

The Head of Centre is accountable for the management and secure storage of all assessment materials. All assessment materials are considered '**live**' until Pearson has made these available as 'Practice papers' on the qualifications website.

## Printing

EDSQ assessments can be printed no earlier than 2 weeks before the live assessment is due to take place.

For each candidate, you should print:

- one Question Paper
- one Task Booklet
- one Observation Booklet at Entry Level only.

The Examinations Officer is the designated person within a centre who is responsible for the safe storage of and access to the controlled assessment materials.

# Conditions for storing assessment materials

The Head of Centre is accountable for the management and secure storage of all assessment materials.

Assessment materials **must** be managed and stored securely conforming to the secure storage requirements below.

Digital Requirements	Recommendation
The data files and assessment areas <b>must</b> only be accessible to IT support and the Assessor for the <b>sole purpose</b> of preparing the assessment and assessing the test	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Firewall</li><li>• Permissions to limit user access to accounts</li></ul>
Learners <b>must</b> only be able to access the assessment areas during the assessment	
After the assessment, user accounts and completed tests <b>must</b> be stored/archived until any appeals are complete	
Any assessment which has been standards verified <b>must</b> be stored for 3 years	Secure backups or archive storage, storage on removable media

## Physical Requirements

## Recommendation

- Strong safe or security cabinet or metal cabinet with locking bar, bolted to wall or floor
- 2 or 3 key holders only

- Secure room in a fixed building, i.e. not a Portakabin or similar
- Walls, ceiling and floor of strong, solid Construction

- Solid door
- Strong, secure hinges
- Security lock, e.g. 5 lever mortise lock
- 2 or 3 key holders only
- There **must** be at least 2 keys rather than 1 key with 2 or more members of staff with access to it. Centres **must not** keep a spare set of keys in a cabinet or safe which can be accessed by members of staff who are not involved in exams administration. Keys **must** either be kept on the key holder's person or kept in a coded key safe which is only accessible to the designated key holders

Any assessment which has been standards verified **must** be stored for 3 years

Secure backups or archive storage, storage on removable media

Centres must have a tracking system for recording when assessment materials are downloaded or taken from secure storage and when they are returned to ensure that the assessment materials remain confidential.

**Please note:** Centres are reminded that completed learner assessments **must** be kept securely both before and after they have been verified by the Standards Verifier. Learner assessments **must not** be handed back to learners at any stage as the assessments stay live until Pearson release the set as practice papers.

# Scheduling the assessments

Assessments may take place at **any time** and on **any date**. The Question Paper, Task and Observation (at Entry Level) do not have to be completed on the same day. The Task and Question Paper components **must not** span multiple sessions.

Centres can separate the observation into two parts if it helps with assessment scheduling. Part one, where the learner downloads the app, and Part two, where the learner makes the video call. These observations do not have to be done at the same time.

## EDSQ Mark Scheme and Assessment Record

The Mark Scheme and Assessment Record document included in the assessment record materials are to be used to record marks for **all** components (Question Paper, Task and Observation at Entry Level). **Please note:** the Mark Scheme and Assessment Record document is specific to each Set.

The assessor **must** complete a separate record for each learner. Centres are encouraged to complete this form digitally.

The results of any internal verification and feedback to assessors should be recorded on the form.

In the event of a resit, the component mark should be recorded on a Mark Scheme for that Set.

The Mark Scheme and Assessment Record **must** be submitted together with the sample requested for standards verification.

# Re-sit rules

Learners **must pass each component** of the assessment. Learners may re-sit a failed component (using a different assessment set). There are no limits to how many times a learner can re-sit.

It is advised that when resitting, centres build in time for additional learning to support the learner's gaps in knowledge and skills before allowing them to re-sit the assessment. Pearson advises that this should not be within 14 days of the learner's prior attempt. However, the re-sit can be undertaken in less than 14 days if the centre believes that the learner has addressed their gaps and is now ready to resit the assessment.

Centres should continue to rotate the assessments sets until the assessment has been passed. Centres are required to keep a log of which assessment sets were used of each learner taking the qualification.

## Location of assessments

The Head of Centre is responsible for ensuring all assessments take place in a suitable venue whether on or off the centre's own premises.

The venue **must** be free from extraneous noise and enable learners to work without disturbance or interruption for the duration of the assessment.

Any room in which an assessment is held **must** provide learners with appropriate conditions for taking the assessment. You should pay attention to conditions such as lighting, heating and ventilation and the level of outside noise.

The centre **must** display the JCQ Warning to candidates and JCQ Mobile Phone poster and any specific instructions related to the subjects being examined. The JCQ handbook can be downloaded from the [JCQ website](#).

No display materials which might be helpful to candidates should be visible in the assessment room.

The seating arrangements in the assessment room **must** be such as to prevent learners from overlooking, intentionally or otherwise, the work of others, and with sufficient space to accommodate assessment papers, answer sheet/workbook(s) and any other required materials.

# Guidelines for Assessors

It is essential that Assessors are clear about the contents of the assessments and the Assessor Guidance document before administering any of the assessments. The Assessor Guidance document can be found on the [secure area of the website](#). **Please note the Assessor Guidance document is specific to each Set and Level.**

The Exams Officer should allow Assessors to access all assessment materials to allow enough time for contextualisation (at Entry Level) and for the creation of dedicated user areas and accounts (email, social media etc).

Any contextualisation of the Task **must** be approved by the Standards Verifier through a phone conversation. Centres are **not** permitted to contextualise the task at Level 1. Assessors need to access the Assessor Guidance and the controlled assessment tests to decide whether contextualisation is needed.

## Prior to assessment

### Preparation for the Question Paper

The question paper should be downloaded and printed.

### Preparation for the Task

At both levels, each learner **must** be provided with a printed copy of the Task instruction booklet.

At Entry Level, the centre **must** provide each learner with:

- a computer that has internet access
- a dedicated assessment user area with a password specific to that learner
- a dedicated email account for each learner
- the facility to download a data file from cloud storage.

At Level 1, the centre **must** provide each learner with:

- a computer that has internet access
- a dedicated assessment user area with a password specific to that learner
- a dedicated email, social media or instant messaging account as directed in the Assessor Guidance for the specific Set

**The learner must only have access to the assessment user area and assessment email/social media/instant messaging account during the Task.**

The folder structure and data files **must** be created as described in the Assessor Guidance.

In addition, the assessor will need access to the learner user areas following completion of the Task to be able to mark the evidence.

## Preparation for the Observation (Entry Level)

Centres **must** schedule an individual observation session for each learner, however, the observation can be separated into two parts if it helps with assessment scheduling.

The centre **must** provide a device such as a tablet or mobile phone that will allow the learner to install an app and apply settings. The device **must** be cleaned of any previous candidates' work i.e. in a clean and prepared state relevant for the observation. The app needs to be uninstalled from the device before the next learner uses it.

Learners may use their own smartphone or device for the Observation task, provided the assessor is able to confirm that the installed app is not already set up on the device.

Centres may log learners in to Play store / app store prior to the app installation part of the Observation if required (for example by centre restrictions).

This device **must** have software or an application installed for video calls with at least **one** contact stored in the appropriate software.

The contact **must** be able to respond to the video call and talk to the learner about the app in a call that lasts at least 30 seconds.

# During the assessment

The assessment **must** take place under supervised conditions, in accordance with

JCQ Instructions for Conducting Examinations, except that:

- The invigilator may be the tutor/assessor. The tutor may undertake sole invigilation duties, even if they have had overall responsibility for preparation of the candidates being examined.
- Assessments may be carried out in rooms used for teaching.

## Question Paper

No additional requirements.

## Task

At both levels, the Task **must** be completed in a single session. However, learners are permitted to have supervised scheduled breaks.

Learners **must** have access to the materials and devices as outlined in the section Preparation for Assessment.

Learners **must not** be able to access another learner's work.

Tasks requiring internet access, social media and email **must** be completed using a dedicated account set up **only** for the assessment. Learners **must not** access their own **personal** email, social media or online account whilst the controlled assessment is in progress.

It is advisable that Invigilators have a reasonable level of IT competence, since they need to ensure learners submit only their own work and need to be assured that learners are not colluding in any way.

## Observation (Entry Level)

Centres **must** schedule an individual observation session for each learner, however, the observation can be separated into two parts if it helps with assessment scheduling.

The centre **must** provide a device such as a tablet or mobile phone that will allow the learner to install an app and apply settings.

This device **must** have software or an application installed for video calls with at least one contact stored in the appropriate software.

The contact **must** be able to respond to the video call and talk to the learner about the app in a call that lasts at least 30 seconds.

Centres may appoint a suitable extra person as the contact to receive the learner's video call. The contact should be in a separate room to avoid feedback between devices. The contact **must** also be familiar with the subject of the call so they can prompt enough discussion to last the required 30 seconds.

## After the assessment

### Question Paper

Tutors/Assessors who mark assessment papers should ensure that the papers are kept in a secure place until marking is complete and then kept securely until they are requested for verification by the Standards Verifier.

### Task

The assessor will need access to the learner user areas following completion of the Task to be able to mark the evidence.

Assessment user accounts **must** be archived after the Task has been marked. In the event of a resit, a new assessment user account **must** be created.

### Observation (Entry Level)

The app needs to be uninstalled from the device before the next learner uses it.

# Standards verification and disposing of materials

The Sample Report Form should be completed to record the results for all components that have achieved a Pass.

After marking and internal verification, the Centre Declaration Form, the Centre Checklist and a password protected copy of the Sample Report Form should be emailed to the Standards Verifier for the selection of a sample of learners' work to be verified.

For each learner, the sample will comprise:

- a Mark Scheme and Assessment Record
- a scanned copy of the completed Question Paper. Originals **must** be securely retained in the centre
- the evidence folder (labelled with the centre number, learner name and Pearson registration learner number) that includes the folder structure provided for download and the completed Tasks. (A compressed/zipped version is acceptable).

The requested learners' work **must** be sent to the Standards Verifier using a secure facility i.e. SharePoint. **Please note:** Assessment materials **must not** be emailed.

The following documents **must** be retained for a **minimum of three years**, for all learners whose assessments have been through the standards verification process:

- Mark Scheme and Assessment Record
- assessments submitted to the Standards Verifier
- records of internal verification meetings
- Standards Verification Reports.

# Pearson contact list

Centres should use [The Pearson Support Portal](#) to contact the following teams:

## Assessment team

For issues with the content of the assessment Sets, mark schemes and general assessment queries, emergencies or incidents during assessments.

**Please note:** The content of the assessment Sets is secure and emailing any part of it is considered a breach of security – if you have a query about the content of a Set or the allocation of marks for a particular component, contact your Standards Verifier by phone.

## Customer Services

We pledge to provide excellent service in all your dealings with us. Each centre will have a dedicated Accounts Specialist that will be their first point of contact.

If you have a question, please contact **FS Assessment** or your **Vocational Quality Assurance Manager** via [The Pearson Contact Portal](#).

In addition, you will find further information on our [Quality Assurance webpages](#).