Functional Skills



# VQA Functional Skills FAQs

# Contents

Qualifications ..... 3

Registering a learner ..... 4

Preparing a learner for assessment ..... 6

Scheduling an assessment ..... 7

Reasonable adjustments ..... 9

Assessment delivery: Speaking, Listening, and Communicating (SLC) ..... 12

Direct claims status (DCS) ..... 14

Results ..... 15

Certification ..... 16

Resits ..... 17

# Qualifications

**This document relates to the following Functional Skills qualifications:**

- VQA Functional Skills English Level 1
- VQA Functional Skills English Level 2
- VQA Functional Skills Maths Level 1
- VQA Functional Skills Maths Level 2

**How many assessments are there in English Functional Skills qualifications?**

There are three separate assessment components for English Functional Skills:

- Reading
- Writing
- Speaking, Listening, and Communicating (SLC).

| | | Reading | Writing | SLC |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **English** | Level 1 | 60-minute assessment | 60-minute assessment | 20-30-minute assessment |
| | Level 2 | 60-minute assessment | 60-minute assessment | 20-30-minute assessment |

**How many assessments are there in Maths Functional Skills qualifications?**

There is a single assessment which is broken into two sections:

- Section A: Non-Calculator
- Section B: Calculator

| | | Total time (single assessment) | Section A: Non-Calculator | Section B: Calculator |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Maths** | Level 1 | 120 minutes | 30-minute assessment | 90-minute assessment |
| | Level 2 | 120 minutes | 30-minute assessment | 90-minute assessment |

# Registering a learner

### How do I register my learner?

Learners are registered on our Verve Management Suite. This is the same process for all our qualifications.

You will be able to register learners by following these steps:

1. on the Verve homepage, select ‘register learners’
2. you can search for the course by using the programme code, or typing the course name into the search box, then clicking the ‘find programmes’ button
3. please ensure that you tick the box for ‘qualifications’
4. select the qualification and then select proceed
5. complete the ‘Booking Details’ screen and click ‘register learners’
6. fill out the learner details as required by the red asterisk; these are: forename, surname, contact number, email address, date of birth and ID seen
7. select ‘save and add learner’ once complete.

Check out our How to Register Learners video to see a visual walkthrough or call us on **03333 583 344** if you’d like bespoke support for your team.

### Can I bulk-register learners?

Verve makes it quick and easy to upload a batch of learners who have the same Assessor/IQA. Start bulk registering learners by doing the following:

1. log into Verve and click on ‘register learners’
2. enter the required programme title or code into the search bar and select the right one from the results list
3. complete the ‘Booking Details’ screen and click ‘register learners’
4. this opens the 'Select Learners' page. Click the red ‘import CSV’ button in the top right corner of the screen
5. you’ll now see an ‘upload CSV’ option. Please download the CSV template accessible and use it to fill in your learners’ details. Once complete, save it to your computer. Just remember: when saving the file to your computer, make sure the file type field is ‘CSV URF-8 (Comma delimited) (.csv)’.

When completing this form, please don't delete anything; make sure all fields are left on the sheet. Verve doesn't accept Y as a response for ID seen so, please enter 1 here.

If you have any issues, give us a ring on **03333 583 344** or email **support@VQA.org.**

**Do I need to specify the qualification level when registering a learner?**

Yes, learners must be registered on to the qualification level for which they intend to undertake assessment(s). However, confirmation of the assessment method is not required at this stage.

**Can I amend the registration once it has been made?**

If you would like to correct a mistake in a learner's registration information, you can contact our Customer Service Team on **03333 583 344** or email **support@VQA.org,** who can make the change for you.

Whilst you can't amend a registration to change the level of the qualification for a learner, you can withdraw them and reregister them on the alternative level without penalty.

**How soon after registering can a learner undertake an assessment?**

Immediately! Online assessments can be undertaken as soon as the learner is registered, and registrations are valid for two years.

Where the paper-based assessment option is selected, we require five working days' notice to prepare things for you.

# Preparing a learner for assessment

### What documents and resources are available to help learners prepare?

There are a range of documents available on our website to help your learners prepare for their exams.

| Item | Description |
|---|---|
| Qualification specification | Outlines the details and requirements of the Functional Skills qualifications. |
| Factsheet | Concise informational document summarising key aspects of the qualification. |
| System diagnostic test | A system driven test to ensure that equipment and software is working correctly ahead of an exam. |
| Practice test | An online test to ensure that learners are familiar with functionality of each question type, for example drag and drop, multiple choice questionnaire (MCQ). |
| Mock test | A full paper-based test and associated mark scheme that a learner can use to help prepare for actual assessments. |

### How many mocks are available?

We have two full mocks available for each level in each subject. Over time, we will release past papers to be used as mocks, so this bank will only get bigger and bigger! Full mark schemes are also available for you to use when preparing your learners.

### How and when can I access mocks?

Mocks and their associated mark schemes can be accessed via our website at any point in your Functional Skills journey with us.

# Scheduling an assessment

### How do I book an assessment for my learner?

There is an 'Examinations Panel' within the Verve Management Suite where you can book an assessment for a learner who has already been registered on their Functional Skills qualification.

Booking a learner onto their exam couldn't be easier. All you need to do is head to this panel and select the learner and assessment that is due to be completed. To complete the booking, we require:

- exam date
- exam time
- invigilation method
- invigilator name and email (if applicable)
- location (if applicable).

Once this has been completed, the learner will be booked in for their exam on our separate exam system.

### Can bookings be made in bulk?

Of course! Bulk bookings can be done by following the same steps as when registering just one learner, but instead of selecting the one learner, you would select all the learners you wish to book onto the assessment.

### Do all exam components have to be booked at the same time?

No, the exam components can be booked in whenever the learner is ready to sit them.

### Can assessments be taken in any order?

Yes!

For Functional Skills English qualifications, VQA does not prescribe a particular order and permits assessments to be taken in any order to support flexibility and to cater to individual needs and circumstances.

There are no dependencies between assessments, and a learner does not need to have passed one assessment to undertake another.

Remember: for Functional Skills Maths qualifications, there is only a single assessment.

# Recognising prior learning (English only)

**If a learner has passed a component with another Awarding Organisation, can we submit a Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) request?**

Yes! If a learner has successfully completed one or more assessment components of a Functional Skills English qualification already, it is possible for us to recognise this and exempt them from having to retake that particular component.

You can submit an RPL request by completing this form. Please refer to VQA's Recognised Prior Learning (RPL) policy for full details on submitting a request.

It is not possible to submit an RPL request for our maths assessment. This is because, whilst other Awarding Organisations may offer their maths assessments across two papers, ours is in one. The way that these papers are designed means that we would not be able to accurately and consistently identify which parts of our exam had been covered by other Awarding Organisations.

# Reasonable adjustments

**How do I make a request for a reasonable adjustment (RA) for a Functional Skills assessment?**

If you feel a learner needs an RA or special consideration, you can complete a request form available through your Verve account. Alternatively, you can fill out the online version of the form by clicking here.

To help us deal with your request as efficiently as possible, please include the following:

- the learner's name
- your VQA registration number (if you're a recognised centre)
- the affected assessment(s)
- the nature of and rationale for the request
- any additional supporting evidence.

Typically, you'll need to fill out a new form for each learner unless a single issue has affected a cohort of learners. In that scenario, a single form can be submitted alongside a list naming all the affected individuals.

It's important for you and your learners to understand all terms in detail, so please read our Reasonable Adjustments and Special Considerations policy for more information.

**Can I book an assessment if I have requested a reasonable adjustment for a learner?**

No, you cannot book a learner until the RA has been approved or rejected by VQA. Once an RA is submitted for a learner and all relevant evidence is received, you will receive a decision in five working days. Once you receive the confirmation that the RA has been approved or rejected, you will then be able to make your booking.

**Are exemptions available?**

Yes. In certain cases where learners have no accessible means to demonstrate the knowledge and skills of an assessment, an exemption may be applied for. Guidance on exemptions is available in VQA's Reasonable Adjustments and Special Considerations Policy.

# Assessment delivery for maths, reading and writing

**What options for assessment delivery are there?**

| Option | Learner location | Invigilator location |
|---|---|---|
| Online remote | Anywhere | Remote |
| Online face-to-face | Employer, college or training provider | With learner |
| Paper-based | Employer, college or training provider | With learner |

VQA Functional Skills exams are delivered through our bespoke online system. There are two options for how the exams are invigilated, each with their own benefits.

**Online remote**: learners can sit their assessments at any time, in any place, with VQA remotely invigilating through its purpose-built record and review system. Input from centre staff is minimal, perhaps a little moral support for learners setting up their assessment, but we take it from there! System support will always be available by phone or live chat during office hours.

**Online face-to-face:** learners sit their assessments online in a controlled setting, invigilated by centre staff who then upload the completed documents for us to review and mark. Our team is on hand during office hours to provide support.

**Paper-based assessments**: for those learners who may prefer a more traditional approach, paper-based assessment is the way to go!

**Are there restrictions on where a candidate can sit an exam?**

The delivery method you choose for the exam will dictate where it can be sat.

The **online with remote invigilation** option is the most flexible and can be taken anywhere as long as controlled environment conditions can be met. Just make sure you're somewhere quiet, with no unauthorised material and no third parties in the room.

**Paper-based** and **online face-to-face** invigilated exams must be sat on employer, college or training provider premises as they will need to be invigilated.

**What is a ‘controlled environment’?**

These are exams for regulated qualifications, meaning they must be taken in an environment that gives us assurance that no cheating has taken place. A ‘controlled environment’ is how we describe an exam environment that minimises the opportunity for distraction, collusion or reference to third-party materials such as notes or textbooks.

The great thing about our remote invigilation option is that a learner can choose to work in their usual manner, perhaps with low-level background music playing or reading questions out loud. As long as the invigilator is able to verify that no malpractice has taken place, all of this is fine.

# Assessment delivery: Speaking, Listening, and Communicating (SLC)

### Who can conduct the SLC assessment?

The SLC assessment must be conducted by an individual of suitable competence. This individual must be added to the centre's VQA profile and must be approved to undertake the role. Please see the qualification specification for further details on who would be considered suitable for this role.

### How is the SLC assessment conducted?

This assessment is conducted as a small group assessment, with a minimum of three and a maximum of five learners. There are some flexibilities around who can make up part of this group to make sure that centres with only one learner are still able to conduct the assessment. Full details can be found in the speaking, listening, and communicating guidance documents available to download from our website.

### Who sets the topic for SLC assessments?

Centres may use the SLC assessments provided by VQA or, if a VQA assessment topic is not suitable for a learner due to their interests or circumstances, centres may select from the SLC pre-approved presentation topics/discussion questions and aims. The approved presentation topics, discussion questions, and aims are designed for use in the VQA Task Template and have already been quality assured. Centres can use them straight away without needing approval.

When a centre chooses not to use the assessment materials provided by VQA and decides to create their own theme, scenario, presentation topic, discussion question, or aim, they must complete the VQA Task Template and submit their centre-devised assessment (CDA) to VQA for approval, prior to the SLC assessment taking place, to ensure the assessment meets VQA guidelines. Further details can be found in the VQA Functional Skills Qualifications in English at Level 1 and Level 2 Speaking, Listening and Communicating (SLC) Handbook available on our website.

Centre devised assessments (CDA) must be submitted to the Quality Team for approval.

**What documents are available to help us prepare for SLC assessments?**

On our website, you'll find a range of documents to help you prepare for and deliver the SLC component to your learners. You can also find these resources on the Verve Management Suite.

**Do I have to book the learners onto the SLC assessment?**

SLC assessment is fully organised and assessed internally by centre staff, which means that no assessment booking on the Verve system is needed. Once complete, mark your learners as complete on the Verve system and our EQA Team will take it from there.

# Direct claims status (DCS)

### Can DCS be awarded for the SLC assessment component?

Yes. This is the only component that is internally set and marked by the centre, which means that it is eligible for DCS.

Further details of the process for achieving DCS can be found in the VQA Functional Skills at Level 1 and Level 2 SLC Quality Assurance and Standardisation Guide available on our website.

### Can I transfer my DCS status from another Awarding Organisation?

If you already offer Functional Skills with another Awarding Organisation and have DCS, transferring it to us is a simple process. Just fill out our DCS transfer document and submit it alongside an EQA report through our online form.

The EQA report must be no more than 12 months old and be from your previous Awarding Organisation. We will also need details of a contact at your previous AO. This will be used in the event that we need to verify the status of your previous DCS.

To meet assurance standards, we will conduct a 5% sample within the first two months of the transfer.

# Results

### How quickly will I get results?

Our SLA for results release is six working days. The SLA for paper-based exams begins on the day that the papers are scanned and uploaded to the system, which must be within 24 hours of the exam being taken.

When new assessment papers are released, the SLA for results release will be longer. This is to allow the awarding process to take place (where we use real performance data to set appropriate pass boundaries). This is usual practice across Awarding Organisations that offer on-demand assessments and is the compromise we make to provide round-the-clock access to assessments.

Where new papers are being awarded, please allow up to 30 days for results to be released.

You can see details of when these awarding periods are happening on our website to help you plan.

For the quickest results turnaround and easiest delivery process, we would encourage the use of our online options.

# Certification

**How long after qualification completion will we receive the certificates?**

Our flagship e-certificates are issued directly to learners, with 99.9% delivered within 24 hours of a pass result. E-certificates are our go-to fast, flexible and eco-friendly certificate solution for several reasons:

- we can issue them faster than paper ones, reducing wait times for you and your learners
- they help the planet stay green by reducing paper use and delivery miles
- they can be issued directly to learners, cutting your administration time.

Paper certificates can be issued upon request, but they take a little longer. 99.9% of our paper certificates are issued within 48 hours.

**Will the certificate be automatically sent once all components have been passed?**

Yes. You won't need to 'claim' a certificate, as our exam system works with our certification system to send certificates.

The only time any manual intervention is required is if the final component the learner has taken and passed is the SLC component in English. In that case, you will need to log in to the Verve Management Suite and confirm that this has been passed to trigger the auto-certification process.

# Resits

### How quickly after a failed assessment can it be re-attempted?

VQA does not specify any minimum duration between assessment attempts.

Learners should be supported to be fully prepared for resits, with time to address any areas of development they might have. We believe that centres are best placed to judge when a learner is ready for their resits and recognise that there can be many factors which might influence how quickly they need to happen.

### How are resits booked?

Resits are booked in the same way that first attempts are: by navigating to the 'Examinations Panel' section within the Verve Management Suite and selecting the learner and assessment that is due to be completed. To complete the booking, we require:

- exam date
- exam time
- invigilation method
- invigilator name and email (if applicable)
- location (if applicable).

Once this has been completed, the learner will be booked in for their exam on our separate exam system.

### Do learners have to wait for all components to be attempted before any required resits can be booked or take place?

No. For Functional Skills English qualifications, assessments can be scheduled at staggered intervals to meet the individual readiness of each learner. Results will be released at the component level, therefore enabling resit opportunities also to be individually scheduled and undertaken.

### Do learners have to resit only the failed assessment components?

Yes, learners are not required to undertake reassessments of any components they have already successfully passed.

**Is there a time limit/window in which resits must be completed?**

Learners have two years from their registration date to undertake Functional Skills qualification assessments, including resits.

Other factors may dictate the timeframe within which all components need to be completed.