Functional Skills



VQA Functional Skills Qualification in English at Level 1 and Level 2

Speaking, Listening, and Communicating (SLC) Controlled Environment

Version 1

Contents

Introduction 3
Controlled Environment 3
Specific Requirements of the Controlled Environment 4
Specific Requirements of the Controlled Environment – In a Remote Setting 4
Validating Assessment Environments 5
Reasonable Adjustments 5

Introduction

This document aims to provide the requirements of a controlled environment when delivering the Speaking, Listening, and Communicating (SLC) assessment component for the following qualifications:

- VQA Functional Skills Qualification in English at Level 1 (610/2626/8)
- VQA Functional Skills Qualification in English at Level 2 (610/2625/6).

In addition to reading this document, it is essential staff are familiar with the following VQA policies and guidance documentation:

- *VQA Functional Skills Qualifications at Level 1 and Level 2: SLC Handbook*
- *Functional Skills Qualifications at Level 1 and Level 2: SLC Quality Assurance and Standardisation Guide*
- *Functional Skills Qualifications in English at Level 1 and Level 2: SLC Remote Delivery Guide*
- *Appeals Policy*
- *Complaints Policy*
- *Conflict of Interest Policy*
- *Equality and Diversity Policy*
- *GDPR and Privacy Policy*
- *Malpractice and Maladministration Policy*
- *Reasonable Adjustments and Special Considerations Policy.*

VQA policy documents can be accessed on our website.

Controlled Environment

The Speaking, Listening, and Communicating (SLC) assessment component must be conducted in a controlled environment to ensure that all learners are assessed under consistent conditions, which supports the validity and reliability of the assessment. This document outlines the requirements of the controlled environment and provides clear explanations of the rules and expectations.
We recommend that the SLC component is conducted in a face-to-face setting, however, centres may conduct the SLC assessment remotely via an appropriate platform (such as Zoom or Microsoft Teams). For information on remote delivery please refer to the VQA Functional Skills Qualifications in English at Level 1 and Level 2: SLC Remote Delivery Guide.

The environment for conducting the SLC assessment is less formal compared to the controlled assessment requirements for the externally-set Reading and Writing components. This relates particularly to the room size and the seating arrangements.

When carrying out the SLC assessment, an Invigilator is not required. However, the assessment must be conducted by the Assessor under controlled conditions. The Assessor must not take part in the presentation, Q&A or discussion.

The Assessor must take responsibility for ensuring a controlled environment is maintained by:

- verifying and confirming the identity of the learners
- collecting and distributing assessment materials as directed by the centre
- communicating the rules for the controlled assessment to the learners
- verifying whether learners have access to any prohibited items
- providing the required equipment for the assessment to be conducted

- monitoring the duration of the assessment and confirming time checks
- monitoring learners throughout the assessment to prevent instances of malpractice
- responding and documenting any issues that may occur during the assessment
- completing a record of attendance, adjustments to the start/finishing time, if applicable, and any concerns raised.

The SLC requirements should be applied by all centres during face-to-face as well as remote assessment environments. It is the centre's responsibility to review the environment in which the assessment is to be delivered and ensure that the requirements are met.

Specific Requirements of the Controlled Environment

Learners should feel at ease and the room should be arranged to facilitate a presentation and discussion. The assessment room must:

- be a designated area that is quiet, such as a room or space specifically designated for the SLC assessment (for example, a meeting room or a section of a classroom)
- be undisturbed for the duration of the assessment and be separate from daily teaching activities:
  - centres must ensure staff and other learners are aware the room is being used for assessment purposes to avoid any interruptions
  - a "Do Not Disturb" sign should be displayed outside of the room
  - during the conduct of the assessment, the Assessor must ensure their mobile phone and the learners' mobile phones (and other devices) are switched off or set to silent mode.
- contain a visible clock in a prominent position in clear sight of all learners
- allow entry to those individuals directly involved/approved to be involved with the assessment
- where appropriate, have its door kept closed for the duration of the assessment
- be configured so that learners have no access to, or sight of work or notes prepared by other learners
- not contain display material that could potentially aid learners with their assessments; this may include, but is not limited to posters, learner work, diagrams, or illustrations
- be sufficiently heated, with adequate lighting and ventilation
- be free from distraction, including excess noise, to facilitate a good quality audio/video recording
- be safe without any risk of harm or injury to those involved in the assessments
- be suitable for accommodating any agreed reasonable adjustments or special consideration requirements - assistive technology, or seating adjustments must be in place before the start of the assessment
- provide ample space for the assessment activities to take place uninhibited
- be able to accommodate any equipment and resources required for the SLC assessment. Staff must ensure that they:
  - prepare all necessary equipment, for example, recording devices, in advance of the assessment
  - test the equipment to confirm it works and have back-up options available in case of technical issues.

Specific Requirements of the Controlled Environment – In a Remote Setting

There are additional considerations where the SLC is conducted in a remote environment and the Assessor must:

- ensure that the same level of expectations of an assessment held in a controlled environment are applied to the remote environment
- verify that any individuals in the remote setting are aware of the assessment taking place to ensure that they are not present in the location designated as the controlled environment
- conduct a remote visual check of the environment to ensure that the learner is taking the assessment without others in the same room
- remind learners of the clock available on their laptop/PC, or stopwatch software.

For more information refer to the Functional Skills Qualifications in English at Level 1 and Level 2: SLC Remote Delivery Guide

Validating Assessment Environments

The purpose of an assessment environment check is to ensure that the learner's surroundings are suitable for the assessment and free from potential distractions or unauthorised resources. Assessors should make a 360° visual check/inspection of the SLC environment to verify it meets the requirements of a controlled environment.

If the assessment is being conducted as a face-to-face on-site assessment, this check will be undertaken in person.

If the assessment is taking place remotely, the Assessor should conduct a 360° visual sweep (using a webcam – enabled devise) of the room (no background filters or video call effects are allowed). Learners should physically move their webcam around the room to ensure that the Assessor can check the validity of the entire space. The Assessor should then ask the learner to verbally confirm that the requirements have been met. Statements may include (where relevant to the arrangement and as often as is necessary, dependent on the number of learners involved):

- 'Can you confirm that you are the only person present?'
- 'Can you confirm that no other person currently has access to this room/area?'
- 'Can you confirm that you feel this assessment environment is suitable for your assessment to take place and that it will not cause any restrictions on your ability to perform to your best ability?'
- 'Can you confirm that this assessment environment is safe and free from harm?'

These confirmations will also assist the Assessor in verifying that the acoustics and audio recording quality are appropriate.

Where the Assessor (or the learner) does not feel that the allocated environment is conducive to enabling a valid, safe, and fair assessment to take place, they can cancel and rearrange the assessment. The decision and reason for it should be recorded on the Learner Assessment Record (LAR).

To confirm the environment check has been carried out, the Assessor should record completion on the LAR to support the internal quality assurance process.

Reasonable Adjustments

Assessors should identify any potential difficulties a learner may face in accessing the SLC assessment as early as possible and select appropriate adjustments to ensure accessibility. Learners are entitled to reasonable adjustments/special considerations including exemptions. The Assessor is responsible for ensuring all agreed reasonable adjustments are met and special considerations applied.
Centres must follow VQA's process for requesting, implementing and recording adjustments in line with VQA's guidance.

For further details, please refer to the VQA Reasonable Adjustments and Special Considerations Policy on the VQA website.

www.vqa.org

Copyright © 2026 VQA (trading as Training Qualifications UK). All rights reserved.
Company number 07827508.
Registered address: Crossgate House, Cross Street, Sale, England, M33 7FT.