Functional Skills



Functional Skills SLC: Handbook Version 04: 2025

Document change log

The following table provides a log of the changes that have been made to the document since the previous version.

Date / Version number	Description of change
Nov 2024 V2.0	EQA sections and DCS guidance updated
July 2025 V3.0	Clarification of SLC assessment group size, assessment tasks, prompts and timings Learner Assessment Record (LAR) template updated
July 2025 V4.0	Clarification of SLC assessment approach

Introduction

This document is designed to assist the centre when preparing learners for the delivery of the Speaking, Listening and Communicating (SLC) assessment component. The centre should engage with this document in preparation for the delivery of SLC assessment covering the following qualifications:

- VQA Functional Skills Qualification in English at Level 1
- VQA Functional Skills Qualification in English at Level 2.

They should also familiarise themselves with the following documents:

- VQA Functional Skills SLC: Controlled Environments
- VQA Functional Skills SLC: Remote Delivery
- Relevant Ofqual/DfE documents **here**.

This document must also be read in conjunction with the relevant qualification specification document.

Our approach to SLC

The SLC assessment component is largely defined by Ofqual guidance.

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 a more engaging and appropriate topic to better meet the learner's needs.

When substituting a VQA topic, centres must use the VQA Assessment Task Template to create their assessment and ensure it matches the assessment structure and requirements, of the VQA assessments. In this case, the assessment does not need to be submitted to VQA for approval.

However, if a centre chooses to devise their own assessments that does not match the assessment structure set out in the VQA assessments, or includes additional elements such as added tasks that extend beyond the approved format, the centre must submit their Centre Devised Assessment (CDA) to VQA for approval at least 4 weeks in advance of use.

We believe this allows space for the delivery of diverse and inclusive assessment tasks, supporting learners to interact with assessment materials relevant to their life experiences, academic progression aspirations or career goals.

Your Assessors

The SLC assessment component must be completed by an individual of suitable competence. This individual should be a qualified assessor. This individual must be added to the centre's VQA profile and must be approved to undertake the role.

Assessment Tasks

Assessment at both Level 1 and 2 **must include** one presentation followed by a question-and-answer session, and one discussion.

Discussions and presentations can vary in length, however, VQA recommends a time range of 5-7 minutes for a presentation, followed by a 3-5 minute question-and-answer session, and 10-15 minutes for a discussion. You may agree a duration longer than this with the learner but be sure to document these conversations.

VQA recommends using the VQA Learner Assessment Record (LAR) to record assessment decisions. If a centre intends to create their own version of a Learner Assessment Record (LAR), this must be submitted to VQA for approval at least four weeks prior to any assessment taking place.

Learners must complete both approved activities to pass the Speaking, Listening & Communicating component.

At both Level 1 and Level 2 the assessment can be completed across more than one session.

A **discussion** is a conversation or debate about a specific topic. There must be a back-and-forth in a discussion – it cannot be a one-way exchange.

A **presentation** is a speech or talk given to an audience. This should include a question-and-answer session to provide a second opportunity for discussion and an opportunity for the presenter to listen and respond.

With that cleared up, here are a few ideas. More ideas are provided in the **VQA Functional Skills SLC: Exemplars** booklet.

Presentations

1	A presentation on a topic of choice, followed by a question-and-answer session. The topic should be **functional** and should be agreed with the assessor to ensure it is appropriate.
2	An informative presentation on job role/ideal job role, followed by a question-and-answer session.

Discussions

1	A discussion about travel, transport, local events, hobbies.
2	A discussion about equality, diversity, inclusivity and disability, provided the learners are comfortable discussing such issues.
3	A discussion about the learner's experience at the centre and ways to improve the learner experience.
4	A discussion about next steps, academic progression or career aspirations.
5	A discussion about local, national or global issues, provided the learners are comfortable discussing such issues.

Assessment Preparation

Learners must only be assessed when the Internal Assessor believes the learners are ready to attempt the assessment. The particulars of the assessment tasks must be given to the learner with enough time for them to prepare. VQA recommends giving the learner the particulars of the assessment 10-days prior to the assessment attempt.

Learners should be encouraged to spend time preparing for the assessment. VQA recommend at least 2 hours of preparation are scheduled within the teaching programme to allow learners to do this on-site, where possible.

The Pass Criteria

Performance will be assessed against the criteria shown below. To secure a pass, student presentations and discussions should be:

- consistent
- effective
- to an appropriate degree for that level.

These criteria should be used alongside the Learner Assessment Record (LAR) when assessing performance. The LAR template is included in the Appendix to this document.

Assessment Authentication

When facilitating the assessment, Internal Assessors are required to conduct validity checks of:

- learner identification/authentication
- the assessment environment.

Both checks should be recorded to support internal quality assurance processes. For further information, consult the following:

- VQA Functional Skills SLC: Controlled Environments
- VQA Functional Skills SLC: Remote Delivery.

Assessment Conditions

SLC assessments at both Level 1 and Level 2 must be carried out with a minimum of 3 participants and to a maximum of 5 participants including the learner(s), who will be observed using appropriate video-conferencing software, live and in 'real time' or observed face-to-face in more traditional assessment environments. When participants are required to make up the minimum number, these participants could be a peer, familiar adult/member of centre staff or an individual of a similar level that can step in to fulfil the role of the other participants.

When delivered remotely, the assessor and IQA (if involved) must also appear on-screen (for introductions, at least) and are not considered part of the group of learners. Consult the following guidance documents for further information:

- VQA Functional Skills SLC: Controlled Environments
- VQA Functional Skills SLC: Remote Delivery.

Level 1 and Level 2 learners can be assessed together for presentation tasks; however, we do not recommend Level 1 and Level 2 learners share a discussion space as the difference in level, ability and confidence may negatively impact on learners and the wider assessment experience.

Acceptable levels of intervention

All learners must be given the appropriate level of support when attempting their SLC assessment, including in understanding the requirement of the task being set, the content of the task and the preferred method of delivery. The centre may change the presentation of the task, within reason, to support a learners' understanding. When delivering the SLC assessment, prompts may be used if necessary to support the flow of the tasks.

The centre must not alter their assessment tasks in ways which impact on meaning or difficulty for validity, comparability and reliability reasons. The centre should not ask the learner to present using technology which they are uncomfortable with; be sure to consider the digital literacy of the learner when using presentation software.

Assessors **must not** take an active role in the assessment. The assessor must only facilitate and observe.

Recording Assessments

The centre must ensure that learners introduce themselves – and are visible throughout - on all recordings.

We strongly recommend all recordings are saved in a suitable format (MP4 or AVI file, for example).

Assessment decisions

Assessors must assess the individual performance of each learner in the group being assessed (or within the group contributing, if the others are not being assessed). Each learner must be assessed against the essential criteria to determine whether each learner has met the criteria and should be considered proficient in this area and at the level.

Assessment decisions must be recorded in the Learner Assessment Record (LAR). These decisions and documents must be available to the EQA when required. An example relevant for each level has been provided in this document.

Providing feedback

Assessment feedback must always be constructive. The SLC LAR provided in the appendix includes a section for feedback from the assessor to the learner at overall and task-specific levels.

Reasonable Adjustments and Special Considerations

For more information, see the following:

- VQA Reasonable Adjustment Policy
- VQA Special Circumstances Policy.

Both can be found on the VQA website.

Internal Quality Assurance

The SLC assessment is a key component of the Functional Skills English qualification and is the only assessment component (of three) which is assessed and moderated internally by the centre. The centre must deploy a suitable strategy which will be subject to review by the nominated EQA.

For the first 10 learners on each relevant qualification assessed by the centre, 100% must be reviewed by the nominated and approved IQA.

Following this, the centre must observe and carry out a written report for a minimum of 10% of all learners across all levels every 12-months. Where VQA raises and confirms issues in relation to an assessor or group of assessors we expect that this would be sampled at a higher rate in order for the centre to assure themselves, and us, that the assessor(s) is suitably assessing the component. This will help ensure that assessments are being conducted appropriately and that assessment decisions – pass or fail – are valid and supported by relevant evidence.

When more than one assessor is deployed across the delivery of SLC, the 10% must include all assessors. The 10% should be distributed equally between all assessors, where possible.
All relevant documents and audio/video recordings must be retained for a minimum of 3 years, beginning from the end of the year in which such documents and recordings were created.

External Quality Assurance

Centres must ensure the External Quality Assurer (EQA) observes or is able to access the first 10 learners completing SLC assessment in order to assure assessments are fit for purpose.

Following this, the number of recordings required for sampling should be based on VQA's EQA strategy and may vary based upon several risk factors. It will never exceed 10 learners, per level, per year.

A review of the tasks or approach to tasks adopted by the Recognised Centre will also:

- be discussed during the Qualification Approval Process
- be reviewed for ongoing suitability during EQA activities.

Direct Claim Status (SLC component only)

Direct Claim Status will be awarded following successful EQA of 10 learners with no actions. DCS will be maintained in line with VQA's EQA Strategy.

Learner Assessment Records (SLC)

In the next section, you will find the learner assessment records for Level 1 and Level 2. There are also completed versions of these tasks in the document: VQA Functional Skills SLC: Exemplars

Appendix : Learner Assessment Record (SLC) – Level 1

Learner name		Full completion date		
Learner number		Remote/F2F	Task 1:	Task 2:
Assessor name		IQA name (if applicable)		
Recognised centre name				

Overall Assessor Feedback

Assessor Decision	
The learner has demonstrated full competence across both assessment tasks.	Yes (Pass)
The learner has failed to demonstrate full competence in consideration of both assessment tasks. See individual task feedback for more information.	No (Fail)

Assessor Declaration			
I confirm the assessment was administered under the conditions set out, in the correct spirit and without bias. The learner's work has been authenticated. To the best of my knowledge, the work contained and evidenced during this assessment is solely that of the Learner. There is no evidence available to suggest otherwise.			
Signature		Date	

Learner Response	
I have read and understood the feedback. I confirm that the work presented in both tasks is my own and mine alone.	
Learner Signature	
Date	

Speaking, Listening, and Communicating Learner Assessment Record

Task type	Presentation	Y / N	Discussion	Y / N
Task content				
Task dates			Duration	

Reasonable Adjustments and Special Circumstances	
Reasonable adjustments have been successfully requested and approved for this assessment task.	Y / N
Special considerations have been successfully requested and approved for this assessment task.	Y / N

Criteria	Detail	Evidenced:
SOS1	Identify relevant information and lines of argument in explanations or presentations	
	Assessor Feedback:	
SOS2	Make requests and ask relevant questions to obtain specific information in different contexts	
	Assessor Feedback:	
SOS3	Respond effectively to detailed questions	
	Assessor Feedback:	
SOS4	Communicate information, ideas and opinions clearly and accurately on a range of topics	
	Assessor Feedback:	
SOS5	Express opinions and arguments, and support them with evidence	
	Assessor Feedback:	
SOS6	Follow and understand discussions and make contributions relevant to the situation and subject	
	Assessor Feedback:	
SOS7	Use appropriate phrases and registers, and adapt contributions to take account of purpose, audience and medium	
	Assessor Feedback:	
SOS8	Respect the turn-taking rights of others during discussions, using the appropriate language for interjections	
	Assessor Feedback:	

Assessor Feedback	
Please provide feedback on each task completed. Assessors are not required to complete AC & Assessor feedback sections, but are required to complete either or for assessment feedback.	
Assessor signature	
Date	

IQA Feedback (if sampled)	
IQA signature	
Date	

Learner Assessment Record (SLC) – Level 2

Learner name		Full completion date		
Learner number		Remote/F2F	Task 1:	Task 2:
Assessor name		IQA name (if applicable):		
Recognised centre name				

Overall Assessor Feedback

Assessor Decision	
The learner has demonstrated full competence across both assessment tasks.	Yes (Pass)
The learner has failed to demonstrate full competence in consideration of both assessment tasks. See individual task feedback for more information.	No (Fail)

Assessor Declaration			
I confirm the assessment was administered under the conditions set out, in the correct spirit and without bias. The learner's work has been authenticated. To the best of my knowledge, the work contained and evidenced during this assessment is solely that of the Learner. There is no evidence available to suggest otherwise.			
Signature		Date	

Learner Response	
I have read and understood the feedback. I confirm that the work presented in both tasks is my own and mine alone.	
Learner Signature	
Date	

Speaking, Listening, and Communicating Learner Assessment Record

Task type	Presentation	Y / N	Discussion	Y / N
Task content				
Task dates			Duration	

Reasonable adjustments and Special Circumstances	
Reasonable adjustments have been successfully requested and approved for this assessment task.	Y / N
Special considerations have been successfully requested and approved for this assessment task.	Y / N

Criteria	Detail	Evidenced:
SOS1	Identify relevant information from extended explanations or presentations	
	Assessor Feedback:	
SOS2	Follow narratives and lines of argument	
	Assessor Feedback:	
SOS3	Respond effectively to detailed or extended questions and feedback	
	Assessor Feedback:	
SOS4	Make requests and ask detailed and pertinent questions to obtain specific information in a range of contexts	
	Assessor Feedback:	
SOS5	Communicate information, ideas and opinions clearly and effectively, providing further detail and development if required	
	Assessor Feedback:	
SOS6	Express opinions and arguments, and support them with relevant and persuasive evidence	
	Assessor Feedback:	
SOS7	Use language that is effective, accurate and appropriate to the context and situation	
	Assessor Feedback:	
SOS8	Make relevant and constructive contributions to move a discussion forward	
	Assessor Feedback:	
SOS9	Adapt their contributions to suit the audience, purpose and medium	
	Assessor Feedback:	

SOS10	Interject and redirect a discussion using appropriate language and register	
	Assessor Feedback:	

Assessor Feedback
Please provide feedback on each task completed. Assessors are not required to complete AC & Assessor feedback sections, but are required to complete either or for assessment feedback.

Assessor signature	
Date	

IQA Feedback (if sampled)

IQA signature	
Date	