

OFQUAL THEMATIC REVIEW: CHANGES TO OCR FUNCTIONAL SKILLS

Functional
SKILLS



Introduction

Ofqual published the results of its thematic review of Functional Skills in January 2015. The review focused particularly on Functional Skills qualifications in English and mathematics at Level 2, looking at the 28 awarding organisations that currently offer Level 2 English and maths functional skills qualifications.

This review was undertaken because of the importance of these qualifications, the number of these qualifications taken and the differences between awarding organisations' approaches.

Many positive comments about Functional Skills were included in the report, such as, over a million qualifications were taken last year, and numbers have been increasing year on year since they were introduced in 2009. The Level 2 qualifications in particular, are important 'gateway' qualifications, used in many existing apprenticeships and by young people who have not already secured grade C or above at GCSE.

Ofqual identified four areas requiring improvement across all Functional Skills awarding organisations:

- improving the quality of assessment materials
- reducing the risk of malpractice and maladministration
- strengthening standard setting procedures
- evaluating better how far qualifications are meeting user needs.

As well as making these recommendations, Ofqual is also pressing for **greater consistency of standards between awarding organisations**, with more of a 'level playing field' in the demand of assessments.

It's therefore important to appreciate that awarding organisations may be making changes to their Functional Skills qualifications over the next few months.

How will these changes affect OCR's Functional Skills?

Following the Thematic Review, we're now working on some changes to our externally-assessed Functional Skills qualifications in English and mathematics. Some changes had already occurred; others came into effect from **September 2015**.

This document explains in more detail what changes have occurred and what is coming soon.

Whilst the thematic review only looked specifically at Level 2, in practice some of the recommendations were also relevant to our Entry and Level 1 assessments. Changes will be introduced to ensure consistency.



Functional Skills English

What will change	Qualification	By when?
Resource documents We have made these documents more authentic, to ensure they reflect real life situations	Reading L1 and L2	✓ Already changed
Stimulus material We have reduced the amount of stimulus material contained in the scenario. These changes will not affect the nature of the tasks.	Writing L1 and L2	✓ Already changed
Moderation of SLC We are investigating additional controls for the monitoring of the internal assessment of SLC.	Speaking, Listening and Communication E1 – L2	Currently in development

Functional Skills maths

What will change	Qualification	By when?
Checking techniques The review highlighted that some candidates were not using the full range of checking techniques available to them. We've reviewed our Guidance for candidates and centres, and we've extended and exemplified the guidance on checking. We hope that centres will act on the new guidance, resulting in more candidates achieving full marks for checking and higher attainment rates.	Maths L1 and L2	✓ Already changed



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