

Getting Started with Functional Skills

Overview

The Functional Skills requirements are an essential aspect of completing an apprenticeship in England. All apprentices need to provide evidence of having Level 2 (or above) qualifications in maths and English. This guide outlines the processes and expectations for current and aspiring apprentices.

Application Process

Submitting Your Qualifications:

Apprentices must submit proof of their Level 2 qualifications in both maths and English during their application process. Here are the specifics based on your situation:

For direct entry candidates: You must provide acceptable evidence of your qualifications to be approved to apply for an apprenticeship position.

For employed candidates enrolling onto an apprenticeship with QA: If you do not have the necessary qualifications at the time of application, you will need to pass the maths and English Initial Assessments. Should you score above a Level 1 in these assessments, you are then required to complete the Level 2 Functional Skills exams while enrolled in the programme.

Initial Assessments

All applicants, regardless of their prior qualifications, must sit the Maths and English Initial Assessments. This is a mandatory requirement set forth by the Education and Skills Funding Agency to ensure all apprentices meet the same standard of competency. Passing the initial assessment does not count as evidence of meeting the functional skills requirements.

On Programme Support

Functional Skills Journey Timeline

After the commencement of the apprenticeship, known as 'Programme Launch' (Day 0), the following timeline applies for functional skills compliance:

Day 0-42 - Apprentices who applied through their employer and were not able to submit evidence during the application stage should submit this. More details about submitting acceptable evidence and how to submit can be found in the Maths and English (Functional Skills) Evidence Requirements guide.

Day 43 - Apprentices who do not have sufficient qualifications or have not submitted appropriate evidence will be contacted regarding a Functional Skills Welcome Call where a tutor will discuss with you about being enrolled onto the relevant Functional Skills learning pathway and given guidance for booking exams once successful mocks have been passed. Due to compliance requirements, learning support or exams cannot take place before this date.

Day 43-6 months – Apprentices must be demonstrating evidence of learning towards their English and maths learning objectives each calendar month. Apprentices who are required to sit exams should do so within this period. More details can be found in the Functional Skills Exams Process guide.

Completion and Certification

To fulfil apprenticeship requirements, passing Functional Skills exams is crucial. Once an apprentice successfully completes these exams, their certification will be recorded against their individual learning record, allowing them to enter Gateway once all other elements of the apprenticeship have been completed to reach End Point Assessment.

Frequently Asked Questions

Why are Level 2 qualifications necessary?

Apprentices in England enrolled in a Level 3 or higher apprenticeship must demonstrate Level 2 qualifications in Maths and English. This mandate, issued by the UK government through the Department for Education (DfE) and the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA), aims to ensure apprentices acquire essential practical skills in English and Mathematics needed for success in their roles and future careers.

What is the difference between Initial Assessments and Functional Skills Exams?

Initial Assessments are evaluations taken during the application process to gauge an apprentice's foundational skills. They are not a substitute for the evidence required for Functional Skills qualifications.

Is there a cost for Functional Skills exams?

For apprentices in England, there is typically no direct cost for Functional Skills exams. These exams are covered as part of the apprenticeship funding provided by the government via the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA)