



Functional Skills Factsheet

“It’s a different approach but if you can get your head round it then it really works... the biggest challenge is that you can’t teach to the test and you can’t gradually build up a portfolio so you have to teach everything.”

FS pilot centre, Bristol

“They (learners) are learning higher level skills... if we don’t take on FS and PLTS we will never make the Diploma what it should be.”

FS pilot centre, London

“Across the curriculum, functional English, mathematics and ICT will help with other subjects (especially English).”

FS pilot centre, Gatwick

“The key is getting students to be able to **do** – employers complain that students do [learn skills] but forget them – don’t retain them.”

FS pilot centre, Coventry

QCA website

www.qca.org.uk/functionalskills

DCSF website

www.dcsf.gov.uk/14-19/functionalskills



Ten things you need to know about functional skills

Functional skills are the essential elements of English, mathematics and ICT that everyone needs to operate confidently, effectively and independently in life and work.

Functional skills and the functional skills qualifications will be introduced nationally in September 2010 and are vital to the future success of all learners.

- 1** Functional skills are important – it is crucial that all young people gain the knowledge and skills that employers want and that everyone needs to prosper in the future. Employers say that not enough school or college leavers have the functional skills required.
- 2** Functional skills involve a more engaging way to learn – through applying skills in English, mathematics and ICT, the learning stays relevant and contextualised, although this has always been part of good teaching.
- 3** Functional skills teaching and learning can help more young people to get higher grades in other qualifications like GCSE.
- 4** Schools and colleges will need to teach functional skills – the national curriculum and the new GCSEs include functional skills.
- 5** The content of the new GCSEs in English, mathematics and ICT means that it won't be possible to properly prepare learners to achieve higher grades without covering the functional skills teaching and learning necessary for the stand-alone tests.
- 6** Functional skills are part of the Diploma, Apprenticeships and the Foundation Learning Tier. These qualification routes reward achievement of a full programme of individual components including functional skills qualifications. There are no alternative qualifications for functional skills in these qualification routes.
- 7** You don't have to teach functional skills as a separate course. Learners can develop these skills as part of GCSEs or Diploma principal learning. Support is available to all functional skills providers on how to do this from National Strategies and LSIS. Training will continue to emphasise the different approaches required for effective functional skills teaching, to ensure that we achieve our ambition of a genuine change in outcomes for learners.
- 8** We want as many young people as possible to gain functional skills appropriate to their level of attainment and to take the stand-alone assessments, where they can demonstrate their ability and get credit for it. Employers also want to see the functional skills qualifications, as guaranteed evidence of both knowledge and application.
- 9** Learners must achieve all three functional skills to complete their Diploma. Attainment of a full Diploma has always represented the highest standard of achievement – it signifies that a young person has the full range of skills necessary for success.
- 10** Work with Ofqual and others on how we can we further improve the assessment of functional skills is ongoing – this includes looking at whether some manner of 'hurdle' can, in practice, fit within the GCSE route.

“We want every school, college, university and training provider to treat employability of their learners as part of their core business.”

Sir Mike Rake
Chairman, BT Group plc
Chairman, UK Commission for Employment and Skills

“We've been teaching functionally for three years and now our results are significantly higher than the rest of the faculty... proof that the skills-based approach works.”

FS pilot centre, Bristol