

Functional Skills Qualifications Specifications

ICT

Level 1 (4527) and Level 2 (4528)
For exams January 2011 onwards
For certification January 2011 onwards





Functional Skills

Specifications

Information and Communication Technology Level 1 (4527) and Level 2 (4528)

Our specification is published on our website (<http://www.aqa.org.uk>). We will let centres know in writing about any changes to the specification. We will also publish changes on our website. The definitive version of our specification will always be the one on our website, this may differ from printed versions.

You can get further copies of this specification from:

AQA Logistics Centre (Manchester)
Unit 2
Wheel Forge Way
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Or, you can download a copy from our website (www.aqa.org.uk)

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1 Introduction



1a Why choose AQA?

We are proud to be one of the UK's largest exam boards with 3.5million students sitting their exams with us in any given year.

As an independent registered charity, we invest all our income in the running of our examinations and in research and development to improve our qualifications and services. We focus on promoting education for the benefit of the public, drawing on years of experience of setting and marking public exams.

We are committed to delivering a straightforward and simple teaching experience, in a manageable timescale.

Why choose AQA's Functional Skills Qualifications?

Over the past three years, we have worked with over 21 000 students and their teachers, in more than 500 schools to refine and develop our Functional Skills qualifications which:

- can help students to achieve their full potential
- are relevant for today's challenges
- are manageable for schools and colleges
- are accessible to all ability levels
- are affordable and value for money.

We work closely with teachers to make sure the introduction of a new qualification is straightforward,

providing free resources to help them get ready to teach, and ongoing support throughout the life of the qualifications. Other benefits of choosing our Functional Skills qualifications include:

- access to subject departments
- training for teachers, including practical teaching strategies and methods, presented by senior examiners
- 24-hour support through our website and Ask AQA – an online searchable bank of frequently asked questions
- past question papers and mark schemes
- a wide range of printed and electronic resources
- free online results analysis, with Enhanced Results Analysis.

We are an educational charity focused on the needs of the learner. All our income is spent on improving the quality of our specifications, examinations and support services. We don't aim to profit from education, we want you to.

If you are already a customer we thank you for your support. If you are thinking of joining us we look forward to welcoming you.

1b Why choose Functional Skills ICT?

- Students who are awarded a qualification in Functional Skills ICT have shown that they have the knowledge, skills and understanding to use ICT for life, learning and work.
- Teachers will find these specifications straightforward and easy to follow. All assessment is externally set and marked, keeping the demands made of teachers during assessment to a minimum.
- Functional Skills ICT is a standalone qualification but it is also a requirement for those entered for the 14–19 Diploma. Some functional elements are embedded in AQA's GCSE ICT specification and economies in both teaching and learning can be made if offering both specifications.
- During a Pilot series of examinations held between 2008 and 2010, the approach and content for the operational examination were thoroughly tested in a range of schools and colleges.
- These specifications provide students with ICT skills which are most useful in everyday contexts and the world of work.
- These specifications promote the development of transferable skills and encourages a teaching approach that is enriching and engaging for all learners.

1c How do I start using these specifications?

- You need to register at <http://www.aqa.org.uk/aqa-ict-resource-zone/aqa-ict-resource-zone-gcse-functional-ict> to ensure that you receive regular updates and have access to mark schemes, past question papers, a whole range of teacher support materials and receive details of teacher support meetings.
- Once you have decided to enter candidates you need to tell us so we can make sure that you get all the material you need for the examinations. This is very important where examination material is sent to you before the final entry deadline. You can let us know by filling in the appropriate 'Intention to Enter' and 'Estimated Entry' forms. If your centre is registered on e-AQA you will receive an e-mail prompting you to submit entry information online. If you are not e-AQA registered we will send copies to your exams officer. Both forms can be downloaded from our website (www.aqa.org.uk/admin/p_entries.php).
- If your centre has not used AQA for any examinations in the past, please contact our centre approval team at centreapproval@aqa.org.uk

1d How can I find out more?

You can choose to find out more about these specifications or the services that AQA offer in a number of ways.

Ask AQA

You have 24-hour access to useful information and answers to the most commonly asked questions at www.aqa.org.uk/askaqa.php.

If the answer to your question is not available, you can submit a query through **Ask AQA** for our team. We will respond within 2 working days.

Speak to your subject team

You can talk directly to the ICT Functional Skills subject team about these specifications either by e-mailing ictfunctionalskills@aqa.org.uk or by calling 0161 953 7563.

Teacher Support Meetings

Details of the full range of our Teacher Support meetings are available on our website at www.aqa.org.uk/support/teachers.php

There is also a link to our fast and convenient online booking system for Teacher Support meetings at events <http://events.aqa.org.uk/ebooking/>

If you need to contact the Teacher Support team, you can call us on 0161 957 3925 or e-mail us at teachersupport@aqa.org.uk

Latest information online

You can find out more including the latest news, how to register to use Enhanced Results Analysis, support and downloadable resources on our website at www.aqa.org.uk

2 Specifications at a Glance

1

Level 1 (Code 4527):

2 hours' duration **80 marks**

Assessment comprises one component. Externally-set and marked activities are to be completed by the candidate under supervision by the centre. A computer for each candidate and shared printer must also be available in the examination room.

Using the Candidate Booklet and a computer, candidates must complete a series of activities using various items of software. One activity will involve the use of simulated Internet and e-mail software provided by AQA. All of the activities are set in a realistic and purposeful context. In the course of the examination, the candidate must produce a number of printouts which must be attached to the Candidate Booklet. The Candidate Booklet and the printouts will be marked by an external examiner.

The centre's computer network **must** be prepared in advance of the examination. *Notes for Examination Officers* for each academic year are provided by AQA to give instructions and advice about this.

Level 2 (Code 4528):

2 hours' duration **80 marks**

Assessment comprises one component. Externally-set and marked activities are to be completed by the candidate under supervision by the centre. A computer for each candidate and shared printer must also be available in the examination room.

Using the Candidate Booklet and a computer, candidates must complete a series of activities using various items of software. One activity will involve the use of simulated Internet and e-mail software provided by AQA. All of the activities are set in a realistic and purposeful context. In the course of the examination, the candidate must produce a number of printouts which must be attached to the Candidate Booklet. The Candidate Booklet and the printouts will be marked by an external examiner.

The centre's computer network **must** be prepared in advance of the examination. *Notes for Examination Officers* for each academic year are provided by AQA to give instructions and advice about this.

AQA's Internet and e-mail software

AQA's Internet and e-mail software is a Flash-based ICT simulation environment, designed to allow users to interact with simulated office applications.

Installing the software is straightforward and updates are automatic. The product works independently of any other application and does not need continuous internet access or the support of software other than Flash Player (Flash 7 or higher). There will be no need for candidates to move between domains of different security during the exam. This will ease the administration burden placed on centres and minimise technical support required during the exam.

View the demonstration at: www.btldesktop.com/aqa/index.htm

2a Summary of Assessment

Here is more information about the design, structure and content of the assessments.

Functional ICT

- The assessment of Level 1 and Level 2 is each of 2 hours' duration. Candidates must work through a number of activities using a computer. They must access familiar software (e.g. spreadsheet, database) and an Internet and e-mail icon (installed on the computer) to work through the activities.
- Candidates are given a Candidate Booklet which guides them through the activities.
- Activities require the use of familiar office software; one activity is a simulation of the use of the Internet and e-mail.
- There are some aspects of the activities that must be answered in writing in the Candidate Booklet; others must be printed out.
- Candidates' printed evidence is attached to the Candidate Booklet and handed in.

The assessment:

- provides realistic contexts, scenarios and problems drawn from everyday life, the

community, the workplace or educational settings

- specifies tasks that are relevant to the context
- requires the application of knowledge, skills and understanding for a purpose
- requires problem solving
- assesses process skills and the outcome of their application in different contexts
- includes no more than 20% fixed response assessment in which a candidate is confined to either a single response or a limited number of correct responses. The means of deriving this response (the process) is not explicitly credited. Fixed response assessment will focus on the assessment of knowledge and understanding for a purpose
- will also comprise of open response assessment which will not direct the route or method by which a candidate may respond
- is written in English at one level below that being assessed, except for specialist vocabulary which is at the level being assessed
- simulates access to the Internet and e-mail.

Materials for the Examination

In preparation for the examination you will receive the following:

Material	When it will be available to centres
Notes for Examination Officers (4527/8/TN)	At the beginning of the academic year
Instructions for (Series) 20XX (4527/8/PM)	6 weeks before the examination
Data Files	6 weeks before the examination
Internet and e-mail simulation	6 weeks before the examination

3

Subject Content

The subject content of these Functional Skills ICT specifications are identical to that published by Ofqual in the Functional Skills Criteria for ICT (November 2009). The ICT Functional Skill Criteria for Level 1 and Level 2 are reproduced below. Numbering has been added for easy reference.

3a Level 1

Skill Standards	Coverage and Range	Notes
Using ICT		
1 identify the ICT requirements of a straightforward task	1.1 use ICT to plan and organise work	
2 interact with and use ICT systems to meet requirements of a straightforward task in a familiar context	2.1 select and use software applications to meet needs and solve straightforward problems 2.2 select and use interface features effectively to meet needs 2.3 adjust system settings as appropriate to individual needs	
3 manage information storage	3.1 work with files, folders and other media to access, organise, store, label and retrieve information	
4 follow and demonstrate understanding of the need for safety and security practices	4.1 demonstrate how to create, use and maintain secure passwords 4.2 demonstrate how to minimise the risk of computer viruses	
Finding and selecting information		
5 use search techniques to locate and select relevant information	5.1 search engines, queries	
6 select information from a variety of ICT sources for a straightforward task	6.1 recognise and take account of currency, relevance, bias and copyright when selecting and using information	

Skill Standards	Coverage and Range	Notes
Developing, presenting and communicating information		
7	enter, develop and refine information using appropriate software to meet the requirements of straightforward tasks	7.1 apply editing, formatting and layout techniques to meet needs, including text, tables, graphics, records, numbers, charts, graphs or other digital content
8	use appropriate software to meet requirements of straightforward data-handling task	8.1 process numerical data 8.2 display numerical data in a graphical format 8.3 use field names and data types to organise information 8.4 enter, search, sort and edit records
9	use communications software to meet requirements of a straightforward task	9.1 read, send and receive electronic messages with attachments 9.2 demonstrate understanding of the need to stay safe and to respect others when using ICT-based communication
10	combine information within a publication for a familiar audience and purpose	10.1 for print and for viewing on screen 10.2 check for accuracy and meaning
11	evaluate own use of ICT tools	11.1 at each stage of a task and at the task's completion

3b Level 2

Skill Standards	Coverage and Range	Notes
Using ICT		
1 plan solutions to complex tasks by analysing the necessary stages	1.1 use ICT to plan and analyse complex or multi-step tasks and activities and to make decisions about suitable approaches	
2 select, interact with and use ICT systems safely and securely for a complex task in non-routine and unfamiliar contexts	<p>2.1 select and use software applications to meet needs and solve complex problems</p> <p>2.2 select and use a range of interface features and system facilities effectively to meet needs</p> <p>2.3 select and adjust system settings as appropriate to individual needs</p> <p>2.4 respond to ICT problems and take appropriate action</p> <p>2.5 understand the danger of computer viruses and how to minimise risk</p>	
3 manage information storage to enable efficient retrieval	3.1 manage files, folders and other media storage to enable efficient information retrieval	
Finding and selecting information		
4 use appropriate search techniques to locate and select relevant information	4.1 search engines, queries and AND/NOT/OR, >, <, >=, <=, contains, begins with, use of wild cards	
5 select information from a variety of sources to meet requirements of a complex task	<p>5.1 recognise and take account of copyright and other constraints on the use of information</p> <p>5.2 evaluate fitness for purpose of information</p>	

Skill Standards	Coverage and Range	Notes
Developing, presenting and communicating information		
6	enter, develop and refine information using appropriate software to meet requirements of a complex task	6.1 apply a range of editing, formatting and layout techniques to meet needs, including text, tables, graphics, records, numerical data, charts, graphs or other digital content
7	use appropriate software to meet the requirements of a complex data-handling task	<p>7.1 process and analyse numerical data</p> <p>7.2 display numerical data in appropriate graphical format</p> <p>7.3 use appropriate field names and data types to organise information</p> <p>7.4 analyse and draw conclusions from a data set by searching, sorting and editing records</p>
8	use communications software to meet requirements of a complex task	<p>8.1 organise electronic messages, attachments and contacts</p> <p>8.2 use collaborative tools appropriately</p> <p>8.3 understand the need to stay safe and to respect others when using ICT-based communication</p>
9	combine and present information in ways that are fit for purpose and audience	<p>9.1 organise and integrate information of different types to achieve a purpose, using accepted layouts and conventions as appropriate</p> <p>9.2 work accurately and check accuracy, using software facilities where appropriate</p>
10	evaluate the selection, use and effectiveness of ICT tools and facilities used to present information	10.1 at each stage of a task and at the task's completion

4 Scheme of Assessment

4a Aims

Functional Skills courses based on these specifications should help people to gain the most out of life, learning and work.

The skills are learning tools that enable people:

- to apply their knowledge, skills and understanding in order to participate and progress in everyday life, education, training and employment
- to engage competently and confidently with others
- to solve problems in both familiar and unfamiliar situations
- to develop personally and professionally as positive citizens who can actively contribute to society.

4b Skill Standards

The assessment will cover the following assessment objectives in the context of the knowledge, skills and understanding set out in Section 3 (Subject Content).

These Functional Skills ICT specifications require candidates to demonstrate their ability to:

- Use ICT systems
- Find and select information
- Develop, present and communicate information.

Weighting of Assessment Objectives for Functional Skills ICT Level 1 and Level 2

The table below shows the approximate weighting of each of the Assessment Objectives in the Functional Skills ICT assessment.

Assessment Objectives	Overall weighting of AOs (%)
AO1: Use ICT systems	20–30%
AO2: Find and select information	10–20%
AO3: Develop, present and communicate information	50–70%
Overall weighting (%)	100%

4c National criteria

These specifications comply with:

- the Functional Skills criteria for ICT
- the Functional Skills Qualification Criteria
- the Arrangements for the Statutory Regulation of External Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland: Common Criteria
- the requirements for qualifications to provide access to Levels 1 and 2 of the National Qualification Framework.

4d Prior learning requirements

There are no prior learning requirements.

However, any requirements set for entry to a course based on these specifications are at your centre's discretion.

4e Equality, access and inclusion

Functional Skills are those intrinsic to English, Mathematics and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) that enable learners to gain the most from life, learning and work.

The Functional Skills pilot awarding organisations worked with the regulators to finalise the Functional Skills criteria for all three subjects. The criteria were reviewed to see whether any of the skills or knowledge needed by the subjects presented a possible difficulty to any candidates, whatever their ethnic background, religion/belief, gender, age, disability or sexual orientation. If there were difficulties, the criteria were reviewed again to make sure that such tests of specific competences were only included if they were important to the subject. The findings were discussed with groups who represented the interests of a diverse range of candidates during an extensive consultation exercise.

When designing Functional Skills specifications and assessments we have ensured that all materials:

- provide fair and equal access to all candidates regardless of their ethnic background, religion/belief, gender, age, disability or sexual orientation
- provide a reliable measure of a candidate's abilities in line with the requirements of the criteria to ensure that the qualification is not devalued in any way
- maximise inclusion but minimise the need to make access arrangements/reasonable adjustments or exemptions.



5 Administration

5a Availability of assessment units and certification

Examinations and certification for Level 1 and Level 2 are available as follows.

	Availability of qualification
January 2011	✓
June 2011	✓
November 2011	✓
January 2012	✓
March 2012	✓
June 2012 and thereafter	✓

5b Entries

Please check the current version of **Entry Procedures and Codes** for up-to-date entry procedures. You should use the following entry codes for the units and for certification.

Level 1 – 4527

Level 2 – 4528

5c Private candidates

These specifications are available to private candidates. A copy of the **Supplementary Guidance for Private Candidates** can be downloaded from http://web.aqa.org.uk/admin/p_private.php

5d Access arrangements, reasonable adjustments and special consideration

Access arrangements/reasonable adjustments are allowed for candidates with special needs and disabilities to help them access the assessments as long as the demands of the assessment are not changed. Such arrangements must not give an unfair advantage or disadvantage compared with candidates not using the arrangements. Because of this, most candidates will be able to access any part of the Functional Skills assessments.

We have worked closely with the regulators to determine which access arrangements/reasonable adjustments and exemptions can be allowed in each Functional Skills qualification to ensure maximum inclusion whilst maintaining the integrity of the qualifications. These decisions can be found in the regulator's Functional Skills qualifications criteria within the Inclusion Statements (Appendix B) for each subject.

We have taken note of the equality and discrimination legislation and the interests of minority groups in developing and administering these specifications.

We follow the guidelines in the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) document: *Access Arrangements, Reasonable Adjustments and Special Consideration: General and Vocational Qualifications*. This document gives guidance to centres on how these arrangements should be administered. It is available to centres via the JCQ website (www.jcq.org.uk) or by following the link from our website (www.aqa.org.uk).

Access arrangements

We can arrange for candidates with special needs and disabilities to access an assessment. These arrangements must be made **before** the examination. For example, we can produce a Braille paper for a candidate with sight problems.

Reasonable adjustments

An access arrangement which meets the needs of a particular disabled candidate would be a reasonable adjustment for that candidate. For example a Braille paper would be a reasonable adjustment for a Braille reader but not for a candidate who did not read Braille. Equality legislation requires us to make reasonable adjustments to remove or lessen any disadvantage affecting a disabled candidate.

Special consideration

We can give special consideration to candidates who have had a temporary illness, injury or serious problem such as death of a relative, at the time of the examination. We can only do this **after** the examination.

The Examinations Officer at the centre should apply online for access arrangements and special consideration by following the e-AQA link from our website (www.aqa.org.uk).

5e Examination language

We will only provide units for these specifications in English.

5f Qualification titles

Qualifications based on these specifications are:

- AQA Functional Skills in ICT Level 1
- AQA Functional Skills in ICT Level 2

5g Certification and reporting results

Where a candidate's performance is sufficient to meet the level requirements, a Functional Skills qualification pass certificate is awarded. No grades are issued with respect to these qualifications.

Candidates entered for Functional Skills ICT are entered at either Level 1 or Level 2, but not both.

Candidates will either be awarded a pass at the level they are entered for or will be recorded as 'U' (unclassified).

We will publish the minimum raw mark for each level when we issue candidates' results.

5h Re-sits and how long unit results remain available to count towards certification

Candidates can re-sit the qualification as many times as they want to within the lifetime of the specification.

A candidate's level is based on the work submitted for assessment.



Appendices

A Level Descriptors

Ofqual have not produced any Level Descriptors for Functional ICT as it is a pass/fail qualification and as such, the criteria make clear what is required to warrant a pass within the 'Skill Standards'.

B Spiritual, moral, ethical, social, legislative, sustainable development, economic and cultural issues, and health and safety considerations

We have taken great care to make sure that any wider issues (for example, spiritual, moral, ethical, social, legal, sustainable development, economic and cultural issues), including those relevant to the education of students at Key Stage 4, have been taken into account when preparing these specifications. They will only form part of the assessment requirements where they are relevant to the specific content of the specification and have been identified in Section 3: Content.

European Dimension

We have taken the 1988 Resolution of the Council of the European Community into account when preparing these specifications and associated specimen units.

Environmental Education

We have taken the 1988 Resolution of the Council of the European Community and the Report 'Environmental Responsibility: An Agenda for Further and Higher Education' 1993 into account when preparing these specifications and associated specimen units.

Avoiding bias

We have taken great care to avoid bias of any kind when preparing these specifications and specimen units.

C Overlaps with other qualifications

From 2010 the Functional Skills standards will form a significant part of new specifications in GCSEs in English, Mathematics and ICT.

Underpinning Functional Skills for all England's young people is their inclusion within the Key Stage 3 curriculum (11–14), and the embedding of the skills within the revised programmes of study for Key Stage 4 (14–16).

Here is a link to the Key Stage 4 Programme of Study:

http://curriculum.qcda.gov.uk/uploads/QCA-07-3337-p_ICT_KS4_tcm8-402.pdf



D Achievement and attainment

Functional Skills have point scores for the Assessment and Attainment Tables. The confirmed points allocations are:

Level 2 = 23 points
Level 1 = 12.5 points
Entry 3 = 7 points
Entry 2 = 6 points
Entry 1 = 5 points

(The points for Levels 1 and 2 are **in addition** to points allocated for other qualifications such as GCSEs, adult literacy and adult numeracy.)

The School Report Card will set the framework for accountability for schools. The School Report Card Prospectus published on 30 June 2009 included Functional Skills attainment in the minimum set of Key Stage 4 indicators.





Functional Skills Qualification in ICT Level 1 (4527) and Level 2 (4528) from 2010 onwards

Qualification Accreditation Number: 500/9029/X

Qualification Accreditation Number: 500/9030/6

Every specification is assigned a national classification code indicating the subject area to which it belongs. The classification code for this specification is CN1.

Centres should be aware that candidates who enter for more than one Functional Skills qualification with the same classification code will have only one grade counted for the purpose of the School and College Performance Tables.

Candidates who have any doubts about their subject combinations should check with the institution to which they wish to progress before embarking on their programmes.

To obtain specification updates, access our searchable bank of frequently asked questions, or to ask us a question, register with Ask AQA:

aqa.org.uk/ask-aqa/register

You can also download a copy of the specification and support materials from our website:

aqa.org.uk/ictzone

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