

English and Mathematics in Apprenticeships

A step by step guide for providers

A partnership between:



The
Education
& Training
Foundation

Foreword

This guide has been produced with the support of The Education and Training Foundation. High quality delivery of English and maths programmes is essential for learners and employers. This guide sets out the key issues that all providers need to consider.

The environment in which English and maths programmes are delivered is changing all the time, particularly in relation to GCSEs. Providers need to understand the changing environment and adapt their delivery as appropriate. This guide will help you review the issues and set out a clear plan as to how to approach the new challenges.



As always, we welcome feedback on our guides as this will help us establish what further support AELP and the Foundation can provide in the future.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Stewart Segal".

Stewart Segal
Chief Executive, Association of Employment and Learning Providers (AELP)

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Introduction

The provision of English and maths is central to the Government's recent reforms to post-16 education and training, with a focus on those aged 16-19 achieving GCSE grades A*-C in these subjects. Potentially, this increase in emphasis on English and maths will have a significant impact on the further education (FE) sector, and some of the issues involved will be explored in this guide.

Apprentices should be given the chance to improve their English and maths skills, even if they have achieved at the level required within their Apprenticeship framework. If they do not already have GCSEs at grades A*-C in English and mathematics, you should provide them with an opportunity to achieve at this level.

Although functional skills are **not** being replaced by GCSEs, they are starting to be seen as 'stepping-stone qualifications' towards GCSE achievement for those aged 16-19. There's more information on this in the section on English and maths in Apprenticeships.

"Most of our learners join us with an Entry Level 3 ability level in English and maths and no prior qualifications. They are unlikely to want to undertake a GCSE straight away, but we are providing the option, even if the uptake turns out to be very small."

Alan Benvie, Skills Solutions

So why is there an increased focus on English and maths? There's concern that literacy and numeracy levels in England are falling behind those of other countries. For example, the recent Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development survey - *OECD Skills Outlook 2013* - found the following:

	% of people in England and Northern Ireland (NI) aged 16-65 at Level 1 or below	Mean % of people in all the countries surveyed aged 16-65 at Level 1 or below	Overall position of England and NI at all literacy and numeracy levels (out of 23 countries)
Literacy	16.4%	15.5%	13th
Numeracy	24.1%	19%	16th

England (with NI) was found to be the only country where those aged 55-65 had similar levels of proficiency in literacy and numeracy as those aged 16-24, yet the performance of young people in other countries has improved across successive generations. This is particularly concerning because young people are entering a much more demanding job market than in the past.

By stepping up the English and maths requirements for all post-16 learners and reforming GCSEs, the Government hopes to equip workers with the vital literacy and numeracy skills needed for the 21st century. This should lead to benefits for:

- the **economy and society** as a whole - for this country to be competitive and create wealth, we need a skilled workforce
- **employers** - if employees have the fundamental skills of English and maths, they will be able to apply these skills to new situations and challenges, leading to greater efficiency, productivity and competitiveness (see STEP 8 for more on employer benefits)
- **apprentices** themselves - the attainment of a certain level in English and maths will provide a basis for developing their employability skills, help them learn,

increase their confidence, enhance their career prospects and improve their opportunities in life

- **training providers** - developing your apprentices' English and maths skills should help them succeed in all their learning aims and improve your completion rates.

About this guide

This guide focuses on English and maths - particularly GCSEs - within Apprenticeships. However, English and maths are important components of other programmes you may offer - for information refer to the AELP publication, *Implementing Study Programmes (including traineeships)*: <http://www.aelp.org.uk/topics/details/study-programmes-and-traineeships/>

This guide is aimed at providers who are considering offering GCSEs in English and mathematics. It will also be useful for all providers who would like to adopt a more coherent approach to delivering English and maths within Apprenticeships in general. Although the guide mainly focuses on GCSEs, functional skills or other English and mathematics qualifications may be more appropriate for many apprentices.

To successfully introduce GCSEs, you will need to take a very similar approach as you did when preparing to offer functional skills for the first time. As functional skills are not being replaced, but will be offered alongside GCSEs, this guide should be read in conjunction with its companion publication - *Moving from Key Skills to Functional Skills: A step by step guide for independent training providers*: <http://www.aelp.org.uk/news/general/details/moving-from-key-skills-to-functional-skills-a-step/>

Although the introduction of GCSEs is bound to represent a challenge for your organisation, take comfort in the following:

- GCSEs are a well-recognised 'brand' - familiar to employers and learners alike
- apprentices may be more motivated to achieve GCSEs than qualifications that are less familiar to them
- although there are critical differences between functional skills and GCSEs, your experience of delivering functional skills will provide you with a good basis on which to build
- workplaces are ideal environments for apprentices to develop their skills; learning in this context will reinforce the importance of English and maths
- as GCSEs have been available for many years, there is a wealth of resources to help with teaching and learning
- as new GCSEs are being developed, there will be help for all those involved in delivering the reformed qualifications - and English and mathematics will be particularly well supported because of the priority being given to these subjects.

Key fact

GCSEs are popular qualifications. In 2012, more than 5 million GCSE certificates were awarded in England, including 1.6 million in English and mathematics.

The aim of this guide is to offer you some practical help so that you can prepare to offer GCSEs. It will:

- explain what actions you need to take
- offer advice, suggestions and tips
- provide you with signposts to further information and support.

Although not necessarily in this sequence, these are the main steps you'll need to take:

- STEP 1** Develop a strategy and policy
▼
STEP 2 Raise awareness
▼
STEP 3 Conduct a skills audit
▼
STEP 4 Consider the best delivery model
▼
STEP 5 Review resources
▼
STEP 6 Examine approaches to teaching, learning and assessment
▼
STEP 7 Decide on an awarding organisation
▼
STEP 8 Gain employer engagement

This guide will take you through each of these steps in turn. But first, here's a summary of the main English and maths requirements within Apprenticeships, a comparison between functional skills and GCSEs and information on GCSE reforms.

English and maths in Apprenticeships

Regardless of the level of English and maths required within their Intermediate or Advanced Apprenticeship frameworks, all apprentices must be offered a Level 2 functional skill or GCSE in English and/or mathematics if they have not already achieved Level 2 standard in these subjects. However, Level 1 English and mathematics continues to be the minimum requirement to complete an Intermediate Apprenticeship.

There is also an expectation that apprentices aged 16-19 will be given the opportunity to progress towards achieving a GCSE at grade A*-C in English and/or mathematics even if they have already achieved the equivalent functional skill at Level 2.

The funding available for English and mathematics qualifications over and above the requirements stated in Apprenticeship frameworks differs depending on the age of the apprentice. Those aged 16-19 are fully funded whereas apprentices aged 19+ are co-funded. For details, refer to the Skills Funding Agency *Funding Rules 2013/14 - Version 3*: <http://skillsfundingagency.bis.gov.uk/providers/fundingrules/>

In *The Future of Apprenticeships in England: Implementation Plan* (Department for Business, Innovation and Skills - BIS, October 2013) the Government articulated its ambition, once the reformed GCSEs have been implemented (and if found fit for purpose), for GCSEs rather than functional skills to be used to meet the English and maths requirements in Apprenticeships. This is a clear indication of the direction of travel regarding future policy. However, we are a long way off that position, and the change in emphasis on English and maths will be gradual. Starting with the new Apprenticeships being developed by Trailblazers, there will be a stronger focus on English and maths in future. In the meantime, Ofsted will be looking closely at the opportunities provided for learners to improve their English and maths.

Although apprentices who already have GCSEs in English and mathematics at grades A*-C (or Level 2 functional skills if aged 19+) do not have to continue studying these subjects, it's good practice to offer higher-level provision, especially if it would benefit the apprentice's career or study aspirations. From 2015, the Government plans to introduce a set of new core mathematics qualifications at Level 3 for learners who want to progress with maths, but for whom an AS/A level in mathematics would be inappropriate. However, it is not yet clear how such provision will be funded.

“As now, employers developing standards will be able to specify a higher level of English and/or maths achievement where this is needed for particular occupations or sectors. If this is above GCSE level, any qualification approved for use in 16-19 study programmes can be used.”

BIS (October 2013), *The Future of Apprenticeships in England: Implementation Plan*

GCSEs and their reform

Tip

Although there are differences between functional skills and GCSEs, there are similarities. Making clear the links between the two types of qualifications will help your apprentices appreciate how they can gradually improve their skills.

Main differences between functional skills and GCSEs

	Functional skills	GCSEs
Subjects available	English, mathematics and ICT.	Available in a wide range of subjects including English and mathematics.
Levels available	Entry 1, 2, 3 and Levels 1 and 2.	Level 1 if achieved at grades D-G, and Level 2 at grades A*-C.
Qualification size/ learning hours	Each functional skill is valued at five credits and takes a nominal 50 learning hours.	Larger qualifications - currently accredited at 120-140 guided learning hours.
Nature of content	Focused on the practical use of English and maths.	Although functionality is embedded, GCSEs are more academic.
Nature of assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At Levels 1 and 2 assessments are through externally set and marked tests (apart from the speaking, listening and communication component of English). Tests can be taken online. All questions are set in real-life contexts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mathematics is assessed through exams. English is currently assessed through a mixture of controlled assessments and exams, but from 2015 will be all exams (apart from speaking and listening, which will continue to be reported separately). Exams cannot be taken online.

Main differences between functional skills and GCSEs

	Functional skills	GCSEs
Nature of assessment (continued)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exam questions are set both with and without real-life context.
Assessment opportunities	Multiple assessment opportunities during the year.	Exams only available in May/June and also in November (specifically for post-16 learners).

“... the new GCSEs ... should give greater assurance of literacy and numeracy to employers, with a greater focus on spelling, punctuation, grammar and the correct use of standard English. The maths GCSE will ensure that apprentices are confident and competent in the basics, and are able to apply their knowledge to real world problems.”
 BIS (October 2013), *The Future of Apprenticeships in England: Implementation Plan*

Some changes have already been made to GCSEs being taught from September 2013; for example, assessments are linear and exams are no longer available in January. More significant changes - designed to better prepare young people for their next steps in education or employment - will come into effect for GCSEs in English language and mathematics being taught from 2015. The major changes are outlined in the table below.

Feature of GCSE	Reforms from 2015 explained
Subject content/ assessment objectives	Content will be thoroughly revised - GCSEs will be more demanding, rigorous and stretching; there will also be significantly more content. In mathematics, more emphasis will be placed on problem solving and in English language, 20% of the marks will be awarded for accurate spelling, punctuation and grammar; learners will also have to read high-quality texts across a range of periods and genres.
Structure	GCSEs will be fully linear with the subject content no longer split into modules; all assessments will be at the end of the programme.
Assessment methods	Assessment for GCSE English language will be through exams; the only controlled assessment will be for speaking and listening - as now, this will be separately reported and will not count towards the final grade. Mathematics will continue to be assessed purely through exams.
Tiered papers (i.e. different papers to target different achievement levels)	Learners will not be able to take separate higher and foundation tiers in English language. However, tiers will still be available in mathematics. There will be some overlap, with the foundation tier covering grades 1-5 and the higher tier grades 4-9.
Grading	GCSEs will be graded 1-9 (instead of the current grades A*-G), with 9 being the top grade; a U will be awarded where performance is under the minimum required for a grade 1. (The equivalent to a current grade C has not yet been agreed, but will probably be a 4 or 5.)

N.B. GCSEs are currently available in English, English language and English literature. From 2015, GCSE English will no longer be available.

For more information on GCSE reforms, see the Department for Education (DfE) publication - *Reformed GCSE subject content consultation - Government response*, and Ofqual's *Reforms to GCSEs in England from 2015 - Summary* (both published November 2013).

STEP 1 Develop a strategy and policy

The first step in the process is for the senior management team to develop a clear strategy and policy for offering apprentices GCSEs in English and mathematics. This will ensure that a whole organisation approach is adopted.

It's also recommended that a lead person is appointed, or a steering group set up to project-manage the introduction of GCSEs. This will help you adopt a co-ordinated approach and develop an ethos of teamwork.

STEP 2 Raise awareness

The next step is to ensure that all staff within your organisation are aware of the growing importance of English and maths within Apprenticeships, and are motivated to play a part - no matter how small - in helping apprentices achieve qualifications in these subjects.

You need to judge how much information different staff will require. For instance, those involved in marketing or on reception may just need a general familiarity. Employer-facing staff will need a greater awareness, and any staff involved in delivery will need to be fully prepared.

Tip

Think carefully about the key messages you want to get across to your staff in order to gain their commitment.

Depending on their role, your staff will need to understand:

- how they will be supported to introduce and deliver GCSEs
- their exact roles and responsibilities
- the English and maths requirements in the Apprenticeship frameworks you offer
- how GCSEs in English and mathematics differ from the equivalent functional skills
- the value to apprentices and employers of developing English and maths skills.

English and maths specialists - you may already employ staff to deliver functional skills. If you identify who would be suitable to develop into GCSE English or mathematics specialists, once they have up-skilled, they can act as a resource for other staff and offer advice on strategies to reinforce and develop English and maths skills within vocational programmes and in the workplace.

Vocational teaching staff may have some involvement in developing apprentices' English and maths skills. They can help engage learners by explaining how English and maths relate to vocational activities. Some vocational teaching staff may feel that this is not their responsibility; if this is the case, their perception will need to be changed. They should be helped to understand that apprentices with good literacy and numeracy are more likely to be successful in their vocational studies ... a win-win situation.

Employer-facing staff need a strong understanding of how English and maths are relevant in the sector/s in which they work. They can help make these skills meaningful for learners and gain the support of their employers. Your employer-facing staff will have a role in encouraging workplace supervisors to take some responsibility for reinforcing the importance of English and maths. See STEP 8 for more on employer engagement.

Recruitment and guidance staff need to be aware of how English and maths fit into Apprenticeship frameworks, in order to offer information, advice and guidance to would-be apprentices and their employers.

There are many ways to help raise the awareness and profile of English and maths within your organisation. These include:

- clearly communicating your English and maths strategy and policy to all staff
- regular staff briefings or meetings about GCSE and other English and mathematics programmes
- working groups made up of vocational teaching staff, English and maths specialists and employer-facing staff, in order to map out opportunities for English and maths development through all aspects of the learning programme
- specifying qualifications in English and mathematics on person specs for teaching and support roles
- explaining the value of English and maths when inducting all new staff
- including English and maths in publicity materials, handbooks etc
- keeping staff up to date with developments and good practice - from within the organisation and outside, e.g. through newsletters, online forums and the intranet.

“Keep all staff informed about developments every step of the way - it then becomes easier when delivery plans are put in place within your own company.”

Louise Timperley, Kaplan

STEP 3 Conduct a skills audit

All staff need to be prepared for the introduction of GCSEs, but this is particularly important if you plan to deliver them in-house (see STEP 4).

The aim of your skills audit - whether formal or informal - will be to find out about your whole team's:

- knowledge and understanding of GCSEs in general
- own skills, qualifications and confidence levels in English and mathematics
- experience teaching English or mathematics
- generic teaching qualifications
- specialist qualifications in teaching English or mathematics.

“Listen to your delivery staff, take note of their concerns and try to provide various support options where needed. Staff need to buy into GCSEs and build up confidence.”

Rebecca Diamond, KEITS

The results of the staff skills audit should alert you to any general or specific skill gaps within your team.

Training and development

Depending on the results of your skills audit, there are a number of ways of addressing skill gaps. You could:

- meet some training needs by **coaching or mentoring** with more experienced members of staff
- offer **external training** through an awarding organisation, a subject enhancement support programme (see below), or another professional development provider
- include the topic of GCSEs as part of your on-going staff **continuing professional development** (CPD) programme and/or **in-house training** activities - you could focus on topics such as ‘selling’ GCSEs to employers, or developing teaching resources, for example. A sample CPD activity is given below.

CPD activity: Getting to grips with the new GCSEs

To start familiarising delivery staff with the reformed GCSEs, ask them to rate their confidence to teach the subject content on a scale of 1-5:

1 = very low confidence and 5 = very high confidence

N.B. This activity is based on the GCSE subject content and assessment objectives for English and mathematics produced by the DfE (links are given at the end of this guide). These documents will provide the framework for awarding organisations to create the detail of their GCSE specifications.

GCSE English language	1	2	3	4	5
Critical reading and comprehension: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • critical reading and comprehension (e.g. identifying and interpreting themes and ideas, reading for different purposes etc) • summarising and synthesising • evaluating writers’ choice of vocabulary, form, grammatical and structural features • critically comparing texts with respect to the above. 					
Writing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • producing clear and coherent text for different purposes and audiences • writing for impact (and with accuracy). 					
Spoken language: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • presenting information and ideas • responding to spoken language • using spoken Standard English. 					
GCSE mathematics	1	2	3	4	5
Number: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • structure and calculation • fractions, decimals and percentages • measures and accuracy. 					

CPD activity: Getting to grips with the new GCSEs (continued)					
GCSE mathematics	1	2	3	4	5
Algebra: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • notation, vocabulary and manipulation • graphs • solving equations and inequalities • sequences. 					
Ratio, proportion and rates of change					
Geometry and measures: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • properties and constructions • mensuration and calculation • vectors. 					
Probability					
Statistics					

Key fact

There is no requirement for staff to hold specific teaching qualifications, although qualifications in teaching English or mathematics would be relevant and desirable. It's up to you to satisfy yourself that teachers have a suitable level of competence.

As delivery staff may be teaching English or maths at a higher level than in the past, and the subject content, assessment methods etc will be new to them, you may have to invest in **external training**. In addition to having an excellent understanding of the GCSE subject matter, delivery staff will need the confidence to engage apprentices, e.g. by putting learning in the context of real-work situations.

Awarding organisations and other bodies, such as Mathematics in Education and Industry (MEI), the National Centre for Excellence in the Teaching of Mathematics (NCETM), the National Association for Numeracy and Mathematics in Colleges (NANAMIC), and the National Association for the Teaching of English (NATE) provide training and support materials, and organise events, conferences etc. These organisations will be particularly keen to help those new to delivering GCSEs, and to support the introduction of the reformed GCSEs from 2015.

The Education and Training Foundation is subsidising **enhancement support programmes** to expand the skills and subject knowledge of staff who are currently delivering English and mathematics at Level 2 (primarily functional skills), who are preparing to teach GCSEs. The mathematics enhancement support programme is being developed by the NCETM in partnership with Centres for Excellence in Teacher Training (CETTs). The programme will last for around four months and will include six days of face-to-face activity, plus online support. Four subject content modules will each focus on a key area of higher tier GCSE mathematics not covered in other Level 2 mathematics qualifications, e.g. algebra and geometry. Participants will:

- self-assess gaps in their subject knowledge
- develop their knowledge and confidence
- improve their pedagogical skills (e.g. learn how to make the best use of technology to engage learners)
- have access to GCSE teaching resources

- gain a deep understanding of the content of GCSE mathematics
- learn how to prepare candidates for GCSE resits (or take the exams for the first time).

For more information on the mathematics enhancement support programme, see: <https://www.ncetm.org.uk/resources/41310>

A similar programme for those preparing to teach GCSE English should be available by spring 2014.

Key fact

Bursaries of up to £20,000 may be available for graduates of relevant subjects who wish to train to teach English or maths. These are aimed at those not currently working in a teaching capacity. For details, see: <http://et-foundation.co.uk/fe-advice.html>

Recruitment or outsourcing

The results of your staff audit may identify serious skill gaps that can't be addressed by staff training alone. You may also find that some staff are resistant to delivering GCSEs. In such cases, you will need to consider recruiting specialist English and maths teachers. Alternatively, you may decide to outsource your delivery to a more experienced provider. There's more information in STEP 4 below.

STEP 4 Consider the best delivery model

You may already have a model that works for functional skills - this could be used or adapted. However, with limited opportunities for apprentices to take their exams, GCSE delivery will need to be carefully scheduled around those dates. Remember that if apprentices complete their other learning aims some time before taking their GCSE exams, it may be difficult to keep them motivated. Also be aware that learners may need more intensive support to achieve GCSEs than other English and mathematics qualifications.

“Don't just assume there is one solution. Look at a variety of models and talk to other providers.”

Caroline Groom, *learndirect*

There are various models of delivery. Your choice will depend on the results of your staff skills audit (see STEP 3), and what is most appropriate to you, the sector/s you work in, your employers and apprentices.

GCSE delivery models - pros and cons

Delivery model	Possible advantages	Possible disadvantages
Outsourced: apprentices go to a different provider for one or both of their GCSEs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching will be by specialist staff. • The provider should have all the necessary resources to deliver English and/or maths. • Set times will be dedicated to English and maths provision. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You'll have less control over the input and quality of delivery. • Teaching is less likely to be contextualised, so opportunities for learning could be missed.

GCSE delivery models - pros and cons		
Delivery model	Possible advantages	Possible disadvantages
<p>Outsourced: (continued)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May be most suitable and cost-effective option where small numbers of apprentices are involved. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May only offer a 'one size fits all' delivery rather than focusing on gaps in knowledge and understanding. • Timetables for delivery may not suit your employers/apprentices. • Cost implications. • Tracking apprentices' progress may be more challenging.
<p>In-house: you take responsibility for delivering GCSEs - depending on the number of learners involved, this could take place at your own centre, one you hire, or at your employers' premises.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where possible, teaching can be related to real-work situations. • All aspects of the Apprenticeship will be seen to be delivered by a co-ordinated team. • You may be better placed to focus on gaps in knowledge and understanding. • Delivery can be scheduled to suit the needs of apprentices/employers. • It should be easy to track your apprentices' progress. • May be the best option where large numbers of apprentices are involved. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing staff are likely to need extra training to deliver GCSEs. • Specialist teachers may have to be recruited; this will have cost implications. • You will need all the necessary teaching and learning resources. • A suitable venue (or venues) must be available for delivery.
<p>Collaborative or partnership arrangement: you could offer one GCSE but have an arrangement with another provider to offer the other. Alternatively, GCSE teachers, resources and facilities could be 'shared' in other ways.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The arrangement can make the most efficient use of resources. • Collaboration can lead to fresh ideas and approaches. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a risk of lack of control and/or co-operation. • Reciprocal arrangements take careful planning and co-ordination.

Other factors to consider

- **How willing or able are employers to release apprentices for off-the-job training?** This can be difficult where there are particularly busy times of the year, such as during the lead up to Christmas or at sale times in the retail sector. In these circumstances, an in-house GCSE delivery model could provide the most flexibility.
- **How is vocational training delivered?** If apprentices usually attend day release on a regular basis, English and maths teaching could be built into this delivery time. In sectors - such as construction - where it is common for apprentices to spend time in block release before starting work, it might make sense to use the opportunity to provide intensive English and maths delivery.
- **Are apprentices geographically spread?** If so, getting them to travel for off-the-job training may prove difficult although it may be easier than travelling to different sites to deliver the training yourself. You could consider providing some of your English and maths delivery through distance learning.
- **How much time needs to be devoted to GCSE tuition?** This could depend on a number of factors, including whether your apprentices are retaking GCSEs or sitting them for the first time.
- **What is the best way to schedule delivery?** Some apprentices will like to have a concentrated period of time devoted to English and/or maths each week or month. Others will prefer shorter sessions.
- **How will you group learners?** It would be inadvisable to teach learners of very different abilities together, so consider the most effective way of grouping learners.
- **If delivering GCSEs in-house, do you intend becoming a registered exam centre?** The process of registering could take some time and will involve complying with various regulations. An alternative would be to arrange for apprentices to take their exams at a nearby centre, although fees may be payable.

STEP 5 Review resources

“There are resources out there, so make sure you’re not reinventing the wheel.”

Caroline Groom, learndirect

Initial assessment tools

An initial assessment (IA) should take place at the beginning of a learning programme. A good IA will help you:

- establish an apprentice’s current level of competence and confidence in English and maths
- ensure that the apprentice starts working towards the most appropriate qualification in each subject; this may not necessarily be the same for English and maths (for instance they may be ready to start a GCSE programme in mathematics, but only a Level 1 functional skill qualification in English)
- group learners according to ability level for teaching purposes
- identify specific support needs and provide information for an individual learning plan (ILP)
- monitor a learner’s progress.

N.B. As many apprentices will already have taken qualifications in English and mathematics, you should ask to see their certificates and any enhanced feedback they

have received. Their exam results so far should be used alongside the results of their IA to determine the way forward. Apprentices who only need short-term support to turn a near miss at GCSE into at least a grade C should normally work towards attaining a GCSE at A*-C. It's recognised, however, that some learners will not be ready to start a GCSE programme, so other qualifications may be more appropriate.

Checklist: Deciding on initial assessment tools		
Task	✓	Notes
Gather together and carefully examine the IA tools you currently use for functional skills.		
Consider whether these tools could be adapted for GCSEs.		
Ask your professional contacts whether they use any particular GCSE IA tools and how useful they find them.		
Collect together information (publicity material, demo versions etc) on a number of commercial IA tools.		
Establish how well the IA tool meets the needs of your learners, particularly those with learning disabilities and difficulties.		
Consider the relevance of each IA tool for apprentices in the sector/s in which you work.		
Evaluate the practicalities of using each IA tool, e.g. options for online and paper-based assessment, ease of use and marking.		
Find out the relative costs of each IA tool.		
Establish any extras included with each IA tool, e.g. immediate results feedback, associated ILPs or bespoke learning materials.		

Whilst examining IA tools, also look at any **diagnostic assessment tools** you have or could purchase. Diagnostic assessment tools will allow you to identify a learner's development needs based on their existing ability levels. The results of such assessments will help you set targets for learning and employ the most appropriate teaching and learning strategies to achieve them.

Individual learning plans

In order to make learning English and maths as personalised and relevant as possible, each apprentice should have an ILP. You may be able to adapt ILP paperwork (or an online system) from your functional skills provision.

Materials for teaching and learning

Good quality teaching resources, particularly online materials, can alleviate some of the demands made on delivery staff and improve learner engagement.

Review the materials you currently use to teach functional skills. Although you may be able to use or adapt some of your existing resources for GCSE delivery, you will probably need to invest in additional resources to cover new subject content. A number of companies sell e-learning solutions and these are worth exploring. Over time, you will gradually build up a bank of paper-based and online resources. Check that your materials are suitable for all your apprentices, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities.

Learning environment

Irrespective of whether you deliver GCSEs in-house or outsource, you should review the whole learning environment to make sure that it will meet your learners' needs.

Checklist: A review of the learning environment	
Questions	Yes/No?
Are venues easily accessible by most learners (e.g. good public transport links)?	
Is parking available on-site or nearby?	
Do the teaching/training rooms have adequate space, heating, lighting, emergency exits etc?	
Do facilities have to be booked in advance?	
Are rooms generally available when required?	
Will there be timetabling issues?	
Are there sufficient tables, chairs etc?	
Are teaching aids (e.g. interactive whiteboards) available if required?	
If using online resources... <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Are there enough computers and printers?• Is the necessary software loaded?• Is there reliable internet access if required?	
Are the facilities and technology regularly maintained?	
Are venues, facilities and equipment suitable for those with physical disabilities, and learning difficulties and disabilities?	
If you decide to register as an exam centre, do you have all the necessary resources to comply with requirements (e.g. a secure storage facility for exam papers and a room of sufficient size for the number of exam desks)?	

STEP 6 Examine approaches to teaching, learning and assessment

There will be a spotlight on how your organisation teaches English and maths, so your approach needs to be carefully considered.

“Ofsted proposes to increase its focus on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in inspection. Paying particular attention to how well teaching develops English and Maths skills.”

BIS (2011), *New Challenges, New Chances - Further Education and Skills System Reform Plan: Building a World Class Skills System*

English and maths within induction

During induction, apprentices need to be given clear information about the English and mathematics qualifications they will be taking. Make sure that they know:

- why it is important that they continue with these vital subjects
- how they will benefit from them personally

- who will support them to achieve their English and mathematics qualifications, and how
- what role they have to play in their own learning
- how and when they will be assessed.

Teaching and learning

You cannot rely on the knowledge, understanding and skills needed to achieve English and mathematics qualifications just being ‘picked up’. You have to ensure that there are structured teaching and learning opportunities.

In order to make learning English and maths relevant and engaging, once your learners have the basics, try to find opportunities for them to practise their skills so that they gain confidence, speed and understanding. Encourage your apprentices and their workplace supervisors to make the most of naturally occurring opportunities in the workplace to develop their English and maths abilities.

There are likely to be specific areas where apprentices need extra support. If possible, focus on these skill gaps - it’ll make it easier to motivate learners rather than going over ‘old ground’.

“Target the learning activity around the areas that need to be developed.”

Caroline Groom, learndirect

Tip

Particularly with maths, consider introducing topics in familiar contexts for apprentices. Once their confidence has grown, they can work towards more abstract problems.

In all aspects of your teaching, think about equality, diversity and inclusion. The needs of apprentices with learning difficulties and disabilities and other special requirements must be catered for, and support provided for those who speak other languages.

Tip

Try to reinforce the importance of English and maths by incorporating the subjects in all schemes of work, lesson plans and vocational learning materials.

On-going assessment

On-going assessment can take place both formally and informally but should happen throughout the learner’s Apprenticeship. Regular assessment will allow you to:

- provide apprentices with feedback, support and encouragement
- review their targets for learning
- evaluate the effectiveness of your English and maths delivery
- establish that apprentices are on the most suitable English and mathematics programmes (if necessary they could swap from a GCSE course to a functional skills programme or vice versa, or even be entered for both qualifications)

- establish when learners are ready to take their exams. This is particularly important with GCSEs as there are only two exam windows each year.

End-of-programme assessment

“It is vital that, in addition to being taught the actual skills in English and maths, learners are shown exam techniques and are given opportunities to work through past papers.”

Louise Timperley, Kaplan

- Bearing in mind that there will only be two opportunities for apprentices to sit GCSE exams each year, ensure that apprentices are entered when they are ready, otherwise they will become demotivated.
- Make sure that your apprentices are familiar with what will be required of them - provide them with instruction on exam technique and give them the opportunity to do ‘mock’ exams.
- Ensure that your apprentices are clear about the dates, times, venues and other final exam arrangements.
- Check that they have all the equipment they need for their exams, such as a ruler and permitted calculator.

STEP 7 Decide on an awarding organisation

If you decide to offer GCSEs in-house, one of your major considerations will be your choice of awarding organisation. GCSEs are available through far fewer awarding organisations than functional skills. In fact, in England, GCSEs in English and mathematics are only offered by:

- AQA
- OCR
- Pearson Edexcel
- WJEC - although learners in Wales do not have to sit linear GCSEs, WJEC has made these available for those in England; WJEC’s modular GCSEs are not available for learners in England.

Use the table overleaf to help you compare awarding organisations and make your decision. To establish what they have to offer, look at each awarding organisation’s website (listed under ‘Sources of information, useful links and references’) and any publicity information they produce.

Key Fact

The Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) publishes advice, guidance and regulations on GCSEs including how exams should be conducted and access/special consideration arrangements. For information, see: <http://www.jcq.org.uk/>

“Talk to all the awarding organisations, as well as other providers, and work out the best for you. If there is a group of you looking into the various services on offer, why not ask the awarding organisation to come and present to you?”

Caroline Groom, learndirect

Checklist: Comparing awarding organisations	
Questions	Comments
Do you have a successful track record of working with this awarding organisation? (N.B. Your existing awarding organisation/s may not offer GCSEs.)	
How much experience does the awarding organisation have with similar providers?	
What is the cost of GCSE exam entry? What does this include? Are there any other costs?	
What kind of training and support is available?	
Are past papers and other resources freely available?	
What kind of post-results service is provided?	

“If you already have a good relationship with an awarding organisation and they offer the services you need, go for it - if it isn’t broken, don’t fix it!”

Rebecca Diamond, KEITS

STEP 8 Gain employer engagement

Why focus on employer engagement?

To ensure your apprentices achieve their English and mathematics qualifications, you should try to get as much support as you can from your employers. Because GCSEs are so well known, in some ways they will be easier for the employer to understand than other English and mathematics qualifications.

You will want your employers to:

- reinforce the importance of English and maths
- allow apprentices time off work for teaching and learning, and to take their exams
- where possible, provide opportunities for apprentices to develop their English and maths skills
- value and foster the role of the workplace supervisor in supporting apprentices.

Tip

Find out whether any of your workplace supervisors would welcome the chance to learn more about GCSEs or other English and mathematics qualifications; there may be opportunities to include them in your in-house training activities.

How to gain employer engagement

To engage employers with GCSEs, you will have to state a strong business case. In some ways this shouldn’t be difficult - after all, numerous studies have found that employers frequently complain that their new recruits are unable to deal with simple problems because they lack basic English and maths skills. Nevertheless, employers may feel it isn’t their job to get involved.

You will need to agree a strategy amongst your own staff so that you give out a consistent message to employers. Employers should be briefed so that they:

- are aware that GCSEs are being reformed to better prepare learners for the workplace
- know exactly which qualifications and levels in English and mathematics their apprentices are aiming at
- are clear how you intend to support apprentices to achieve their English and mathematics qualifications
- understand how developing their employees' English and maths skills will be of benefit to them (see below).

Benefits to employers

“Employers need to be sold the benefits of developing a learner’s English and maths skills, rather than the features. Make sure you sell these upfront.”

Caroline Groom, learndirect

Be sure to encourage your staff to promote the benefits your employers will gain through having literate and numerate employees. For instance, there should be greater productivity and efficiency, less absenteeism, reduced staff turnover and fewer complaints. All this can lead to the organisation retaining or improving its reputation and gaining a competitive edge. It will also help them to achieve a motivated, effective and ‘rounded’ workforce.

If possible, provide specific examples of how English and maths can benefit their particular business.

Tip

Try getting some quotes from employers or apprentices who are positive about the value of English and maths. You can use these to help you sell the benefits to other employers; include them in your promotional materials and in your negotiations.

Action Planning

Now that we’ve explained the steps in turn, here is an action plan to help you prepare for the introduction of GCSEs.

English and mathematics GCSE action plan				
Actions	By whom?	By when?	Achieved?	Further actions and by whom/when
1. Develop a strategy and policy and appoint a GCSE lead person/set up steering group.				
2. Raise awareness with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • English and maths specialists • vocational teaching staff • employer-facing staff • recruitment/guidance team. 				

English and mathematics GCSE action plan (continued)				
Actions	By whom?	By when?	Achieved?	Further actions and by whom/when
<p>3. Conduct a staff skills audit and consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • coaching or mentoring • external training, e.g. through a subject enhancement support programme • CPD/in-house training. <p>Use skills audit to help decide on delivery model (see below).</p>				
<p>4. Consider the best delivery model. Decide whether to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • outsource GCSE delivery • deliver in-house • deliver through a collaborative or partnership arrangement. 				
<p>5. Review resources. This will involve examining:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IA and diagnostic assessment tools and ILPs (adapt from current or choose off-the-shelf) • materials for teaching and learning, including e-learning solutions (amend existing or buy commercial products) • the learning environment: venues, facilities and equipment. 				
<p>6. Examine approaches to teaching, learning and assessment and adapt as necessary. Consider, how to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • include English and maths in your induction programmes • ensure apprentices have the basic skills needed to move on to GCSEs • reinforce English and maths development through all areas of provision • make the most of on-going assessments • prepare learners for exams • ensure equality, diversity and inclusion. 				

English and mathematics GCSE action plan (continued)				
Actions	By whom?	By when?	Achieved?	Further actions and by whom/when
<p>7. Decide on an awarding organisation using a range of criteria (e.g. experience working with similar providers, support available and costs involved).</p>				
<p>8. Gain employer engagement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • agree a strategy to sell the benefits of developing English and maths skills • foster the role of employers, particularly workplace supervisors. 				

Finally...

You will need to **monitor the quality of your English and maths provision**. It's a good idea to get everyone who is involved together on a regular basis so that they can:

- reflect on current delivery and share areas of good practice
- discuss ideas for new resources and teaching methods
- check systems for monitoring learner progress
- plan opportunities for apprentices to develop their English and maths skills in the workplace and through their vocational programmes
- undertake CPD activities, e.g. peer observation and feedback.

From time to time it will also be necessary to review the quality of your **policies and procedures** for English and maths provision, particularly in relation to:

- targets for retention, achievement and progression
- tracking systems and other documentation
- observation of teaching and learning
- the identification of staff training and development needs
- feedback from employer and apprentice surveys.

Any observations of learning, and data on learner achievement and progression should feed into a provider self-assessment, which will form the basis of an **improvement plan** for the whole organisation.

Preparing to offer GCSEs within your Apprenticeship frameworks may seem daunting at first, but as you go through the steps outlined in this guide, you'll realise that you can build on the work you've already been doing with functional skills.

Sources of information, useful links and references

The quotes in this guide have been provided by:

- Louise Timperley - formerly Head of Apprenticeships, **Kaplan**
- Rebecca Diamond - Director of Curriculum, **KEITS Training Services Ltd**
- Caroline Groom - Business Improvement Director, **learnirect**
- Alan Benvie - Director, **Skills Solutions**

Useful links

DfE subject content and assessment objectives for GCSE English language for teaching from September 2015:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/254497/GCSE_English_language.pdf

DfE subject content and assessment objectives for GCSE mathematics for teaching from September 2015:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/254441/GCSE_mathematics_subject_content_and_assessment_objectives.pdf

FE Week in partnership with Tribal (November 2013), *Maths & English* supplement: <http://feweek.co.uk/2013/11/01/maths-and-english/>

Refer to *Moving from Key Skills to Functional Skills: A step by step guide for independent training providers* (see below) for links to various functional skills resources. Although these resources are not focused on GCSEs, you may find some of the content helpful.

Useful websites

- AELP - <http://www.aelp.org.uk/>
- The Education and Training Foundation - <http://www.et-foundation.co.uk/>
- Joint Council for Qualifications - <http://www.jcq.org.uk/>
- MEI - <http://www.mei.org.uk/>
- NANAMIC - <http://www.nanamic.org.uk/>
- NATE - <http://www.nate.org.uk/page/home>
- National Apprenticeship Service - <http://www.apprenticeships.org.uk/>
- NCETM - website has information on courses and events, self-evaluation tools, a CPD providers' directory, and news on various initiatives - <https://www.ncetm.org.uk/>

Awarding organisation websites:

- AQA - <http://www.aqa.org.uk/>
- OCR - <http://www.ocr.org.uk/>
- Pearson Edexcel - <http://www.edexcel.com/Pages/Home.aspx>
- WJEC - <http://www.wjec.co.uk/>

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<http://skills.oecd.org/skillsoutlook.html>

Ofqual (November 2013), *Reforms to GCSEs in England from 2015 - Summary*

<http://comment.ofqual.gov.uk/gcse-reform-june-2013/>

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<http://skillsfundingagency.bis.gov.uk/providers/fundingrules/>

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aelp association of employment
and learning providers

Association of Employment and Learning Providers
Colenso House
46 Bath Hill
Keynsham
Bristol
BS31 1HG
t 0117 986 5389
e enquiries@aelp.org.uk
www.aelp.org.uk

The
**Education
& Training
Foundation**

The Education & Training Foundation
157-197 Buckingham Palace Road
London
SW1W 9SP
t 020 3740 8280
e enquiries@etfoundation.co.uk
www.et-foundation.co.uk

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