

Participant pack

Module 8

Improving initial and diagnostic assessment for functional skills

Handouts

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- HO 2: Reflection log
- HO 3: Your table
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Appendices

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PowerPoint notes

HO 1 Design the perfect learner

You and the participants on your table have 10 minutes to design / draw the perfect learner. You should note all the aspects of this individual on the flip chart paper provided.

On your tables discuss this perfect being – during this you must only give positive and brilliant suggestions, which should be greeted by your table colleagues with applause and cheers. **YOU are not allowed to use the word 'but'**. All suggestions **MUST** be greeted in a positive manner.

You can be as creative as you wish.

After 10 minutes, be prepared to share your ideas with the other tables.

HO 2 Reflection log

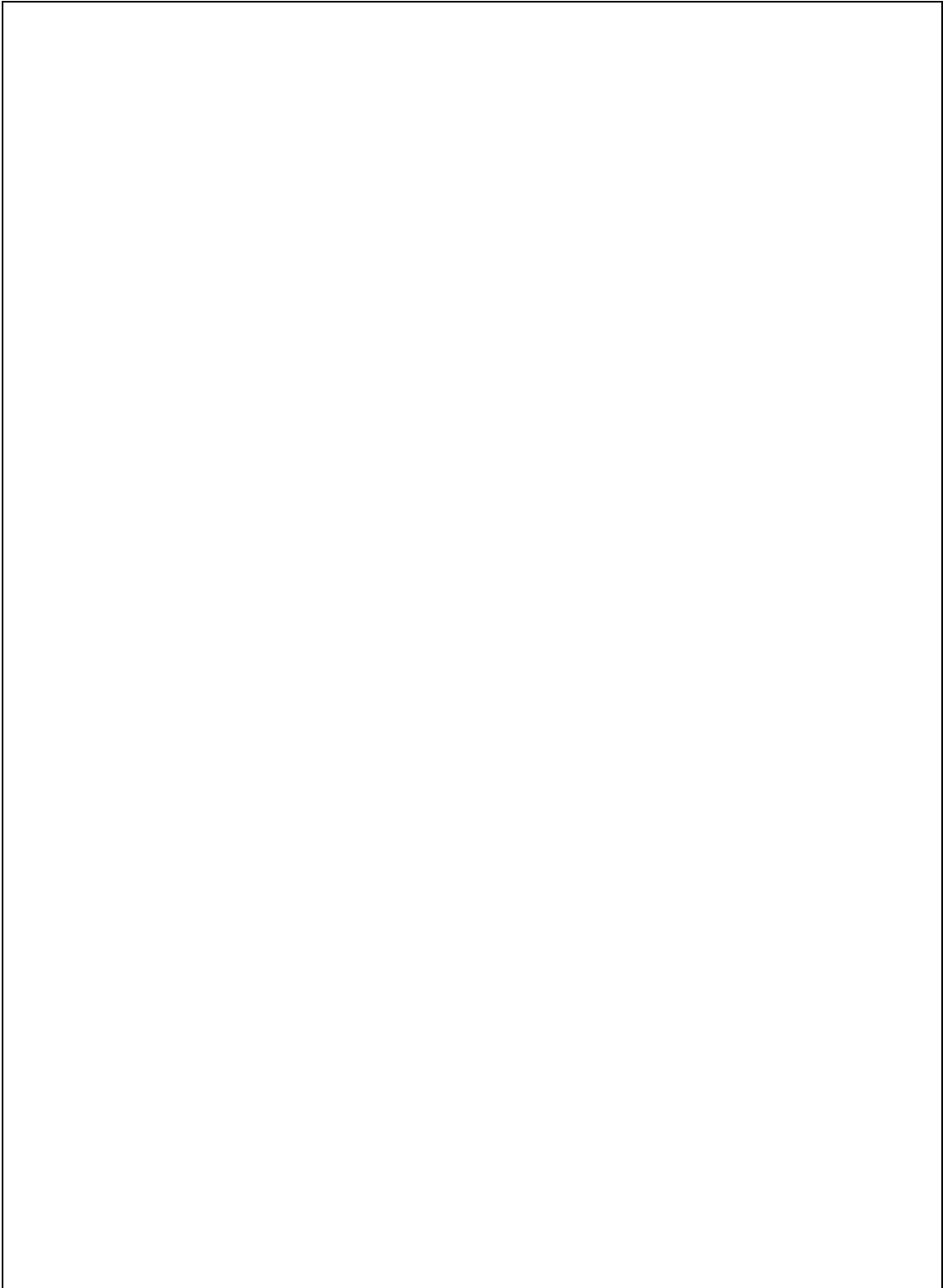
Use this sheet to record any issues and actions that arise during each section.

Use the space on the back to reflect on the session and how you have used the information and ideas to inform your own practice.

Activity	Issues	Actions
Purpose of initial assessment		
The learner journey		
How are functional skills different to key skills and Skills for Life?		
What does good practice look like?		
Putting tools together		
The learner		
Communication		

Turn over 

Reflection

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for a reflection or response.

HO 3 Your table

Who on your table has experience of the following?

Please note your table number on the chart. Find out who has experience of teaching and assessment of key skills, Skills for Life and / or functional skills, or other English, maths or ESOL. Record your findings in the chart using tally marks.

Table number				
Area of expertise	Teaching Yes / No	Initial assessment Yes / No	Diagnostic assessment Yes / No	Managing Yes / No
Key skills				
Skills for Life				
Functional skills				
Other English, maths or ESOL				

HO 4

Purpose of initial and diagnostic assessment

One per table

Discuss the purpose of initial and diagnostic assessment.

Use this sheet to note your discussions.

When you have written all the purposes (one per box) you can think of, pass your sheet to the next table who can pass theirs on, snowballing the sheets around the table until every table has seen and noted on every sheet.

You will eventually get your own sheet back.

HO 4 continued

HO 5

What makes functional skills different? – the clues are in the criteria

The functional skills level differentiators

Many English / literacy, maths / numeracy and ICT initial assessment tools focus on **technical skills**. Functional skills require that we look at a **wider range of skills**.

The Ofqual *Criteria for Functional Skills Qualifications* January 2012 (Ofqual/12/5127) <http://www.ofqual.gov.uk/downloads/category/67-functional-skills-qualification-criteria> state that the assessments must:

- 5.1 provide realistic contexts, scenarios and problems;
- 5.2 specify tasks that are relevant to the context;
- 5.3 require application of knowledge, skills and understanding for a purpose;
- 5.4 require problem solving;
- 5.5 assess process skills and the outcome of their application in different contexts.

And that:

The level of difficulty for functional skills assessment must be determined by the following interacting factors:

- 6.1 the **complexity** of tasks / problems and the contexts within which they are embedded;
- 6.2 the **technical demand** of the content that might be applied in these contexts;
- 6.3 a learner's level of **familiarity** with the type of task / problem and context;
- 6.4 the level of **independence** required of the learner.

The assessment must be 'entirely open response or predominantly open response' (Ofqual, 2012 page 3).

If summative assessments aim to reflect real-life contexts and settings, we must assess whether learners can tackle such contexts. Good practice in assessment is about choosing an appropriate tool for assessment.

Criteria for functional skills qualifications Ofqual, 2012 Ofqual/12/5127 Available at: <http://www.ofqual.gov.uk/downloads/category/67-functional-skills-qualification-criteria>

HO 6a

Initial and diagnostic assessment tools

Tool	Further information	Comments

HO 6b

Initial and diagnostic assessment tools

Tool	Further information	Comments
Awarding organisations		
BKSB	http://www.bksb.co.uk/	
Forskills (Skills builder)	http://www.forskills.co.uk/index.php?page=product-overview	
Nationally-developed diagnostic assessment	http://rwp.excellencegateway.org.uk/Diagnostic%20Assessment/ Look also at analysis of free writing, handwriting and spelling in the Literacy tutor instruction manual: http://rwp.excellencegateway.org.uk/Diagnostic%20Assessment/Literacy/ Look at the analysis of numeracy errors and a calculator checklist in the Numeracy instruction manual: http://rwp.excellencegateway.org.uk/Diagnostic%20Assessment/Numeracy/	
LSIS Tools library (initial assessment)	http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/page.aspx?o=162091	
Target skills	https://shop.tribalgroup.co.uk/vmchk/Target-Skills/Target-Skills-Gold.html	
Move On (initial assessment)	Follow the Learner Route http://www.move-on.org.uk/	
Others, e.g. NIACE, Guroo	http://www.guroo.co.uk/	

HO 6c Example diagnostic assessment summary

Name	formula	area & volume	units of measurement	ratio & proportion	fractions & percentages	numerical calculation	place value & number conventions	estimation & measurement	averages	charts & graphs	description & comparison of data sets	collection & recording of data	accuracy & checking procedures
Darren Osborne	Poor skills	Needs some help	OK	Poor skills	OK	Poor skills	OK	Needs some help	Poor skills	Poor skills	Poor skills	Needs some help	Needs some help
Frank Spencer	OK	OK	OK	Poor skills	OK	OK	OK	Needs some help	Poor skills	OK	Needs some help	OK	OK
Sanjay Singh	OK	Needs some help	OK	OK	Needs some help	OK	OK	OK	Poor skills	Needs some help	Needs some help	OK	OK
Aisha Kaur	Poor skills	Poor skills	Needs some help	Poor skills	Poor skills	Needs some help	Needs some help	Needs some help	Poor skills	Needs some help	Poor skills	Needs some help	Poor skills
Emma Simpkins	Poor skills	Needs some help	Needs some help	OK	Poor skills	OK	OK	Needs some help	Poor skills	Needs some help	Poor skills	Needs some help	Needs some help
Juliana Lewoski	Poor skills	Needs some help	Needs some help	Poor skills	Poor skills	Needs some help	OK	Needs some help	Needs some help	Needs some help	Poor skills	OK	Poor skills
Chloe Matthews	Needs some help	Needs some help	OK	OK	Needs some help	OK	OK	Needs some help	Poor skills	OK	Poor skills	Needs some help	Needs some help
Wei Chung	Needs some help	Needs some help	OK	Poor skills	OK	Poor skills	OK	Needs some help	Poor skills	OK	Needs some help	OK	Poor skills

Key	Poor skills	Needs some help	OK
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HO 7

Methods of initial assessment

Methods of initial assessment (from *The initial assessment toolkit – KSSP, 2007*)



Documents – qualifications, non academic certificates and awards, records of achievement, references and so on can all provide useful information about the skills and abilities that the individual brings to his or her programme.



Self-assessment – the individual's own views should be taken seriously. They are an important dimension in the overall picture, put into perspective by information from other sources.



Discussions – provide an ideal situation for trainer and learner to get to know each other.



Assessment tools – where the individual's rating or score is compared with that of others.



Structured activities – it may also be relevant to create situations that have been designed specifically to give valid and reliable samples of the individual's performance.



Observation – direct evidence of how the person performs either at or away from the workplace.

HO 7 continued

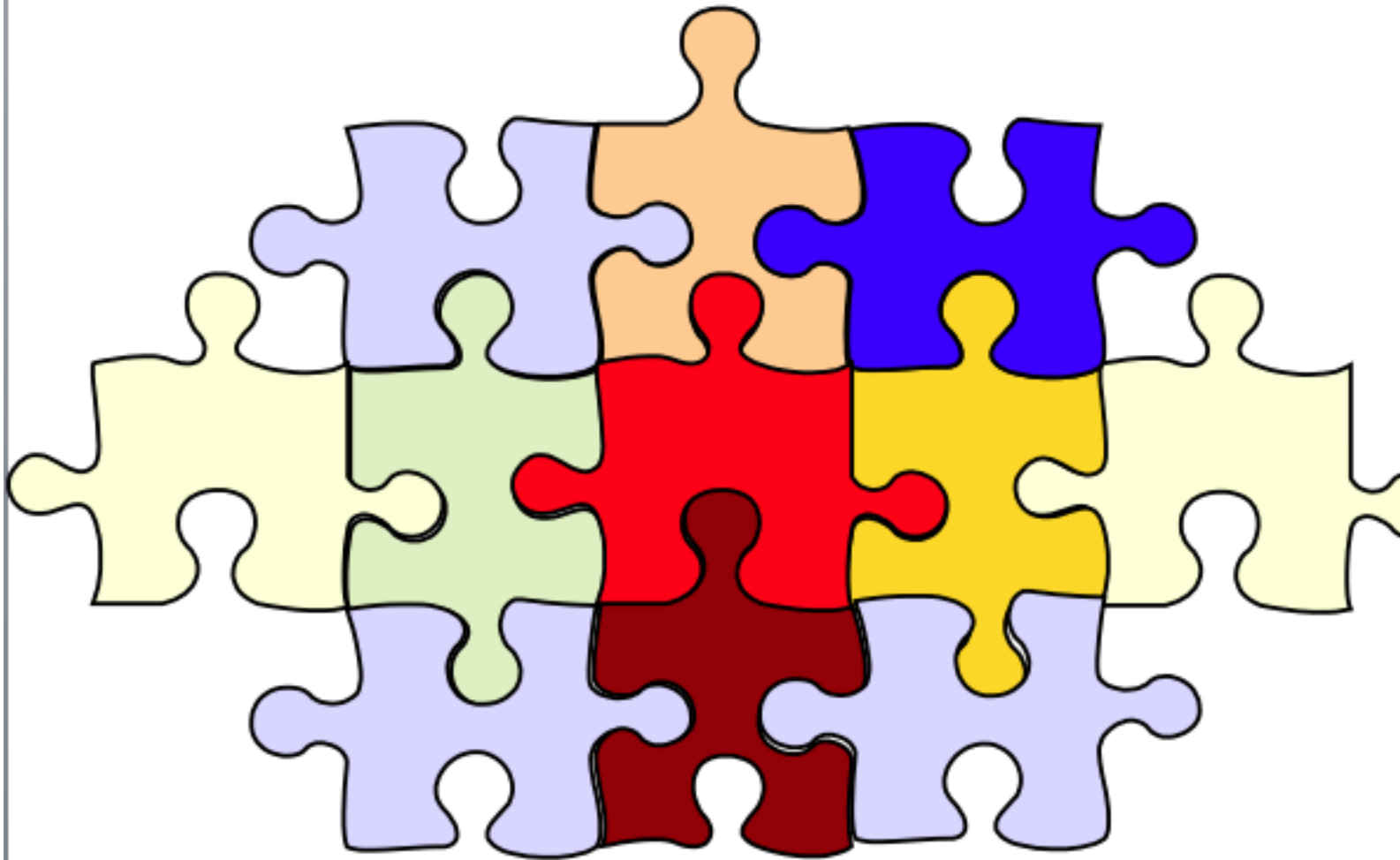
Method	Comment
Documents	
Self-assessment	
Discussions	
Assessment tools	
Structured activities	
Observation	
Other methods	

HO 8 What do the regulatory criteria tell us about initial assessment?

Functional skills assessment requirements	How can we find out if the learner can tackle these issues? What resources / tools are available or could be generated?	Who in the team supporting the learner will be responsible for this?	
		Initial assessment	Diagnostic assessment
Complexity, familiarity and independence as well as the technical demand of the level the learner is working towards			
Set within realistic contexts and scenarios			
Require application of knowledge, skills and understanding for a purpose			
Require problem solving			

Assess process skills and the outcome of their application in different contexts			
Open response questions are asked			
Task-based assessment is the focus			
Do not prescribe the process/es or method/s by which the candidate responds			
Other factors to consider			
Description of your model of initial and diagnostic assessment			

HO 9 Communication



Write in each piece of the jigsaw who should be involved in the initial assessment process.
How does your jigsaw compare with those of others in your group?
Where do the pieces interface – how will the communication be managed?

HO 10

Top tips - initial and diagnostic assessment – what actions do you need to take?

Tools that have effectively supported the assessment of Skills for Life or key skills could be adapted to provide support for assessing functional English, functional mathematics and functional ICT.

Good practice	Is this well developed or do further actions need to be taken in your centre?
Induction	
<p>Course information identifies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • any qualifications which will be used as indicators of skills on entry to the course; • functional skills content embedded into the course; and / or • functional skills entry requirements of a course. 	
<p>Learners are made aware of the relevance of functional skills to their potential achievement in vocational / other programmes and they understand the implications of any skills deficits identified through the assessment process.</p>	
<p>Sufficient time is allowed to conduct initial assessment and an appropriate venue is provided to allow privacy and quiet. Learners are actively engaged in the process.</p>	
<p>Methods and tools are not based solely on technical difficulty and skills but also consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • all four level differentiators; • problem solving skills; • whether the learner can identify and then select the functional skill needed to solve a problem; and • apply their skills appropriately in a range of contexts. 	

A range of methods is used as part of the initial assessment process.	
Communication and staff skills	
Staff are fully trained in fair assessment techniques and in the use of the assessment tools selected.	
There is a referral system for learners identified as requiring further diagnostic assessment and additional support.	
All staff are aware of the initial and diagnostic assessment process and how to access, interpret and use the results to inform teaching and learning.	
A team approach is used to support the learner.	
Assessment information is used to inform the development of individual learning plans.	
Assessment information is used to differentiate teaching sessions to maximise the learning for all.	
Initial assessment information is collected and used to inform strategic management.	

HO 11

Resources

Guidance

For general guidance on functional skills, the *Functional Skills Starter Kit* will be published in May 2012. There is also a starter kit for assessment which is a useful source of information.

See them both from this link:

<http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/node/1150>

Teaching and learning problem solving, KSSP, 2005

Available at:

<http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/pdf/Teaching%20and%20learning%20Problem%20Solving.pdf>

Inclusive learning approaches for literacy, language, numeracy and ICT, LLUK, 2007

Available at: <https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/eOrderingDownload/LLUK-00680-2007.pdf>

Preparing to coordinate and manage functional skills, LSIS, 2009

Available at: http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/pdf/fsfa_ptcmfa_web.pdf

Move On approach, online practice tests and skills development opportunities:

www.move-on.org.uk

National Strategies: DfES development project for schools – *Leading functional skills*

<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20110809101133/http://www.nsonline.org.uk/secondary/functionalskills>

Teaching and learning functional English, Functional Skills Support Programme (FSSP), 2008

Available at:

<http://archive.excellencegateway.org.uk/page.aspx?o=201308>

Teaching and learning functional maths, FSSP, 2008

Available at:

<http://archive.excellencegateway.org.uk/page.aspx?o=169932>

Teaching and learning functional ICT, FSSP, 2008

Available at:

<http://archive.excellencegateway.org.uk/page.aspx?o=126264>

Removing barriers to literacy, Ofsted, 2011

Available at: <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/removing-barriers-literacy>

Tackling the challenge of low numeracy skills in young people and adults, Ofsted, 2011

Available at: <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/tackling-challenge-of-low-numeracy-skills-young-people-and-adults>

Initial and Diagnostic assessment: a learner-centred approach, LSIS, 2008

Available at http://sflip.excellencegateway.org.uk/pdf/4.2sflguidance_3.pdf

Making prisons work: Skills for rehabilitation, BIS, 2011. This report has implications for initial and diagnostic assessment in offender settings.

Available at <http://www.bis.gov.uk/assets/biscore/further-education-skills/docs/m/11-828-making-prisons-work-skills-for-rehabilitation>

Initial and diagnostic assessment – guidance and resources

Free literacy and numeracy skills check, initial assessment tools including contextualised assessments. Also *Good practice guidelines* for all aspects of assessment, DfES, 2007

<http://archive.excellencegateway.org.uk/page.aspx?o=toolslibrary>

Free diagnostic assessment tools for literacy, language (ESOL), numeracy and dyslexia, and tutor instruction manuals describing the diagnostic assessment process and good practice in assessment, DfES, 2006. Also included are assessments for free writing, spelling and handwriting and a numeracy error analysis.

Available at: <http://rwp.excellencegateway.org.uk/Diagnostic%20Assessment/>

Improving initial assessment in work-based learning, LSDA / LSC, 2003

Available at:

http://archive.excellencegateway.org.uk/pdf/Improving_initial_assessment_in_work_based_learning.pdf

Initial assessment toolkit for key skills and Skill for Life, Key Skills Support Programme (KSSP), 2006

Available at:

http://archive.excellencegateway.org.uk/media/KSSP/ia_toolkit_lo_res.pdf

Level Crossing activities, KSSP

Available at: <http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/page.aspx?o=195646>

Self-assessment card sort activity (for use by learners), LSIS

Available at: <http://t1p.excellencegateway.org.uk/t1p/fs/fs-resources/assets/CPD1/Functional%20skills%20self-assessment%20cards.pdf>

Improving initial assessment: good practice, LSN, 2007

Available at: <https://crm.lsnlearning.org.uk/user/order.aspx?code=060002>

Note: this may no longer be available.

Ofqual regulatory criteria

Criteria for functional skills qualifications. Ofqual/12/5127 January, 2012

Available at: <http://www.ofqual.gov.uk/downloads/category/67-functional-skills-qualification-criteria>

Controlled assessment regulation for functional skills: Entry 1, Entry 2, Entry 3 in English, mathematics and ICT; English speaking, listening and communication at Entry 1, Entry 2, Entry 3, Level 1 and Level 2. Ofqual, 2011

Available at: <http://www.ofqual.gov.uk/downloads/category/81-functional-skills-controlled-assessment-regulations>

Functional skills subject criteria for English, maths and ICT Entry 1, Entry 2, Entry 3, Level 1 and Level 2. Ofqual/11/4950, September 2011

Available at: <http://www.ofqual.gov.uk/downloads/category/68-functional-skills-subject-criteria>

Appendix 1

Guidance on initial and diagnostic assessment

A learner skills audit, or initial / early assessment, in each functional skills subject is essential. A college or training provider, or a secure setting, may know very little about a learner and will carry out an initial assessment of their skills levels to identify learning needs before beginning a course.

Whatever the context, it is important to assess learners' functional skills at an early stage and to consider the impact of the outcomes of this on arrangements for teaching and learning.

Definitions of initial and diagnostic assessment

Initial assessment is defined by the QCDA as:

“..... (helping) teachers consider the learner's specific needs and plan opportunities that will help remove any barriers to learning they might have.”

There are many alternative definitions, including the Skills Funding Agency (Adult Skills Budget Funding Requirements 2011-2012):

“Initial assessment is a holistic process where providers can start to build up a picture of an individual's achievements, skills, previous learning experiences, goals and learning needs. Importantly an initial assessment must also identify the learner's basic literacy, numeracy and ESOL skill level using a tool that is based on the literacy and numeracy standards and core curriculum.”

And in the LSIS leaflet *Initial and diagnostic assessment: a learner-centred process*:

“Initial assessment happens at the time of a learner's transition into a new learning programme. It is a holistic process, during which you start to build up a picture of an individual's achievements, skills, interests, previous learning experiences and goals, and the learning needs associated with those goals. This information is used as a basis for negotiating a course or programme.”

There are also various definitions of diagnostic assessment. Broadly a diagnostic assessment happens following an initial assessment and is conducted in order to determine particular support that may be needed.

The Skills Funding Agency defines diagnostic assessment thus:

“Diagnostic assessment will identify a learner's strengths and weaknesses and highlight any specific skills gaps. It helps provide a detailed learner profile against the standards and curriculum documents and must be used to inform and structure a learner's Learning Agreement to use as a basis for a programme of study.”

The LSIS leaflet *Initial and diagnostic assessment: a learner-centred process* describes diagnostic assessment thus:

“Diagnostic assessment helps to identify specific learning strengths and needs. It determines learning targets and appropriate teaching and learning strategies to achieve them. This is important because many learners have higher-level skills in some areas than in others. Diagnostic assessment happens initially at the beginning of a learning programme and subsequently when the need arises. It is related to specific skills needed for tasks.”

It is recommended that diagnostic assessment in particular is carried out by a teacher with a significant level of expertise. For functional skills this is likely to be someone who has specialist teaching qualifications in literacy, ESOL or numeracy (DTLLS), or ICT, and who is also able to assess the learner’s level of functionality.

Further general guidance on assessment

The LSIS Assessment Starter Kit <http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/node/1152> contains information and guidance about developing effective and robust assessment practices.

- Section 1: Assessment – purpose and policy
- Section 2: Self-check and action planning
- Section 3a: Developing effective practice
- Section 3b: What guidance is available for assessment within workplace delivery?
- Section 3c: What can we learn from other providers?
- Section 3d: What does Ofsted say?
- Section 4: Assessment tools
- Section 5: Professional Development

Find guidance and more information about all stages of assessment: initial, diagnostic, preliminary skills checks, formative (assessment for learning) and individual learning plans on this link.

<http://sflip.excellencegateway.org.uk/resources/assessmentguidance.aspx> .

A three-hour CPD programme on assessment for learning is available on the Being Functional site: http://tlp.excellencegateway.org.uk/tlp/fs/fs-resources/cpd_act_1.php. This programme gives many links to useful resources for assessment. It includes, for example, self-assessment strategies (such as sort cards) for learners.

Initial assessment for functional skills

Initial assessment is a relatively brief assessment, lasting maybe 30 minutes or more, at the beginning of a learning programme in order to inform a starting point for learning.

Purpose of initial assessment

The purpose of a functional skills initial assessment is to establish the learner's level of confidence in English, mathematics or ICT skills, in order to make appropriate recommendations about the programme of functional skills learning.

Good practice in initial assessment of functional skills suggests that:

- There is a good mix of task-based (or practical) and test-based assessment tasks, so ensuring that the learner's level of functionality, or ability to apply skills in different circumstances, is assessed.
- Ideally initial assessment should be within a context with which the learner is familiar. For workplace or vocational learners, this should be within the context of their chosen programme of learning. Note that the [Tools Library site](#) has contextualised initial assessments for English and mathematics skills.

It is important to recognise that the 'level' of a functional skill is determined by a combination of factors:

- Familiarity to the learner of the situation or problem;
- Autonomy – the independence of the learner in identifying and selecting the skills they will need, and in tackling the situation or problem;
- Complexity of the situation or problem the learner is tackling; and
- Technical demand of the skill required.

Further good practice guidelines for initial assessment are in a leaflet entitled '*Initial and diagnostic assessment: a learner-centred process*':

http://sflip.excellencegateway.org.uk/pdf/4.2sflguidance_3.pdf .

There are top tips on initial assessment on this link:

<http://sflip.excellencegateway.org.uk/resources/assessmentguidance.aspx>.

Functional skills for adults: Preparing to coordinate and manage functional skills has a useful section on assessment on pages 7-9:

http://archive.excellencegateway.org.uk/pdf/fsfa_ptcmfa_web.pdf

Initial assessment tools

A web search for functional skills initial assessments will result in the most current developments in this area. Some of these are listed in HO 6b. Most of these are commercially-available resources and it is likely that more resources will be developed in this area. There is no nationally-developed initial assessment tool specifically designed for functional skills.

However, it is possible to use existing nationally-developed and commercially-developed adult literacy and numeracy initial assessment tools to assess basic English and maths skills. These meet at least part of the need for a test-based assessment of skills by indicating broad learner strengths and gaps in underpinning knowledge and skills. **However they are insufficient on their own as they do not assess functionality.**

This test-based approach should therefore be supplemented, for example, by setting brief integrated tasks where learners are required to apply English, mathematics and ICT skills to solving a problem. This could be an individual or a group task. This task-based or practical assessment should be relevant to the learner's proposed programme of study. Examples of functional tasks are available (see below for some sources), but it is likely that providers will be able to develop appropriate initial assessment tasks based on their own knowledge of the requirements of particular programmes of learning.

- Move On tasks. An example of a Move On integrated task: http://www.move-on.org.uk/downloadsFile/downloads3030/FLLN%20assignment_trip_plan.pdf. More assignments are on [this link](#).
- The adult core curriculum site <http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/sflcurriculum> has integrated activities (tasks) for the following sections: employability skills; family learning; embedded skills.
- Key skills practice test. Key Skills > Trainer <http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/keyskills4u> provides a useful set of test questions that will provide information to support initial assessment.
- Initial assessment for adult literacy and numeracy. The Tools Library <http://archive.excellencegateway.org.uk/page.aspx?o=toolslibrary> on the Excellence Gateway has guidance about initial and other aspects of assessment, as well as nationally-developed tests for adult literacy and numeracy.

In the diagnostic tools for literacy section of the Skills for Life site, there is a tool for assessing free writing to levels and a miscue reading analysis.

<http://rwp.excellencegateway.org.uk/Diagnostic%20Assessment/Literacy/>

- Assessment of free writing – the instructions for this are in the literacy tutor instruction manual, pages 331-340.
- Miscue analysis – the instructions for this, including a scoring system are in the document *Diagnostic assessment: literacy: materials for assessing reading using miscue analysis*.

Guidance with regards to the level achieved in initial assessment and the level recommended for study

Ensure that, following a thorough assessment of all aspects of functional skills, the learners are on the correct level for functional skills. Note that this may not be the same as the key skills or Skills for Life level.

There are implications for planning and support where the functional skills level is set by the particular Apprenticeship Framework rather than the learner's needs.

Note the guidance for accreditation says: "...a marginal fail at level 2 does not result in a pass at level 1. Learners must be entered at the right level."

Diagnostic assessment

Diagnostic assessment (see http://sflip.excellencegateway.org.uk/pdf/4.2sflguidance_3.pdf) helps to identify specific learning strengths and needs. It determines learning targets and appropriate teaching and learning strategies to achieve them. This is important because many learners have higher-level skills in some areas than in others.

Diagnostic assessment may happen at the beginning of a learning programme and subsequently when the need arises. It is related to specific skills needed for tasks.

Initial assessment and diagnostic assessment are closely linked: diagnostic assessment gives further, more detailed and specific information. Together they help you and the learner build a clear picture in order to:

- personalise learning;
- develop an individual learning plan;
- begin the process of assessment for learning that will continue throughout the learner's programme; and
- make links to progression routes and prepare for the next steps.

There are guidance booklets and top tips on diagnostic assessment on this link: <http://sflip.excellencegateway.org.uk/resources/assessmentguidance.aspx>.

Assessment for learning

Assessment for learning is sometimes called formative assessment and is an integral part of teaching and learning. This assessment should take place, more or less formally, throughout a learning journey. It should include all staff involved, including employers and assessors, who should comment on learners' abilities to use their English, mathematics and ICT skills to solve everyday / workplace problems.

- Sheet 1: Quick start guide – assessment for learning has guidance about the process. http://tlf.excellencegateway.org.uk/tlf/fs/fs-resources/cpd_act_1.php

- There are guidance booklets and top tips on assessment for learning on this link:
<http://sflip.excellencegateway.org.uk/resources/assessmentguidance.aspx>

Appendix 2

Sample test questions

These sample test questions are shown here by kind permission of Edexcel.

Example test questions	
Example of SfL / KS AON / numeracy questions at Level 1	
Q1 Eight friends go to a firework display. The table shows the entry cost.	
Six of the friends are 16 years old. Two of them are 15 years old.	
Entry cost	
Adults (16 years or over)	£5.00
Children (aged 2 years and under 16 years)	£3.00
Infants (under 2 years)	FREE
What is the total entry cost for the friends?	
A £28.00 B £30.00 C £36.00 D £40.00	
Q2 The friends arrive at the firework display at 7:25pm. They stay for two and a quarter hours and then leave for home. <i>[Images showing 4 watches]</i>	
Which watch face displays the time that they leave?	
A Watch a B Watch b C Watch c D Watch d	
Q3 The table shows the prices of refreshments.	
Refreshments	
Pasties	£2.00 each
Baked potatoes	£2.49 each
Sausage rolls	£1.50 each
One visitor buys one baked potato and two sausage rolls. The total bill is £5.49 Which reverse calculation can the visitor use to check the bill?	
A £5.49 + £1.50 + £1.50 + £2.49 B £5.49 – £1.50 – £1.50 – £2.49 C £5.49 + £1.50 + £2.49 + £2.49 D £5.49 – £1.50 – £2.49 – £2.49	
Q4 The organisers have one steward for every 50 visitors. There are 850 visitors at the firework display. How many stewards do they have?	
A 15 B 16 C 17 D 18	

Example of functional skills maths question at Level 1

Where you see this sign you must show clearly how you get your answers because marks will be awarded for your working out.

Q1 Mr Akram is going to drive his family to the zoo. He wants to work out how long it should take to drive to the zoo. Mr Akram uses this formula:

$$\text{Time taken} = \text{distance travelled} \div \text{average speed}$$

The zoo is **75 miles** away from where the Akram family live. Mr Akram wants to drive at an **average speed of 50 miles per hour**.

(a) **How long should it take Mr Akram to drive to the zoo? (2)**

Use the box below to show clearly how you get your answer.

The Akram family get to the zoo at 10.20 am. The zoo closes at 6.45 pm. They want to stay at the zoo until it closes.

(b) **How long can the Akram family stay at the zoo? (2)**

Use the box below to show clearly how you get your answer.

(Total for Question 1 is 4 marks)

Q2 Here are the entrance fees to the zoo.

Adult (17 years and older)	Child (4 years to 16 years)	£ 19.75 per adult
Senior citizen (60 years and older)	Family ticket (2 adults and 2 children)	£ 12.50 per child
Under 4 years old		£ 12.50 per person
		£ 55.00
		Free

Mr Akram is 42 years old.

Mrs Akram is 41 years old.

Their son, Josan, is 12 years old.

Their daughter, Laxmi, is 9 years old.

Mrs Akram thinks the family ticket will be cheaper than buying a ticket for each person.

(a) Is Mrs Akram right? (4)

Use the box below to show clearly how you get your answer.

Here is a timetable for some of the shows at the zoo.

Show	Show times					How long the show lasts
Seals	10.30	11.30	13.30	14.30	15.30	15 minutes
Birds of Prey	10.45	11.45	12.45	13.45		30 minutes
Reptiles		11.00	13.00	14.00	15.00	30 minutes
African Adventure		12.00	13.30	15.00	16.30	45 minutes
Dolphins		11.15	13.45	14.45	15.45	30 minutes
Penguins		12.00	13.20	14.40		20 minutes
Big Cats	10.45	11.30	13.45		16.00	30 minutes
Allow 15 minutes to walk between the shows						

The Akram family wants to see these shows

- the Reptiles
- the Big Cats
- the Dolphins
- the African Adventure.

They decide to see the Big Cats at 10.45. They want to spend 30 minutes eating lunch.

The Akram family wants a timetable for the day. The timetable must include:

- the start time and the finish time for each show they will see
- the time for lunch.

The Akram family needs to allow 15 minutes to walk between the shows.

(b) Make a timetable for the Akram family. (5)

Write your timetable in the box below. *[Blank timetable chart]*

(Total for Question 2 is 9 marks)

Q3 The Akram family sees this sign in the zoo.

Ten new meerkats born this year

Zamu (male)	Asi (female)
Newi (male)	Wisi (male)
Jung (female)	Shmu (female)

Lan (male)	Katak (male)
Bodong (male)	Harriet (female)

Laxmi wants to sponsor the next meerkat that is born. Josan thinks the next meerkat that is born is more likely to be a male than a female.

(a) Is Josan right?

Explain why you think this. (1)

Write your answer in the box below.

The Akram family go into the zoo gift shop.

Here is a list of some of the things on sale in the gift shop.

- Big Cats pen set £ 3.75
- Dolphin pen set £ 3.75
- Postcard 60p
- Big Cats poster £ 3.25
- Dolphins poster £ 3.25

Mrs Akram says she will buy some things for Josan and Laxmi. Josan chooses the Big Cats pen set. Laxmi chooses the Dolphins poster and a postcard. Mrs Akram pays with a £10 note.

(b) How much change should Mrs Akram get?

Use the box below to show clearly how you get your answer. (2)

(Total for Question 3 is 3 marks)

Example of SfL /KS Communication / literacy question at Level 1

Questions 11 to 15 are based on the following draft letter.

Thank you for your article on Variant Computers. Since the launch of Variant's	line 1
new IFX computer, my friends and I is convinced that Variant have got their prices	line 2
very wrong once again.	line 3
Variant computers are the last choice of buyers in today's computer market. They	line 4
are under-powered and over-priced machines. The IFX computer, with a	line 5
minimum random memory of 128Mb, would probably have sold very well priced	line 6
at £750.	line 7
Does the management of Variant ever look at the advertisements for other PCs	line 8
most other systems with the same specifications sell for about £700.	line 9
	line 10
Variant – and those who seek to promote to the fantastic capabilities of Variant's	line 11
software and hardware – will have to work very hard to sell the products.	line 12
	line 13

11 In line 2 the word 'is' is not correct. It should be

- A were
- B am
- C are
- D was

12 The word 'probably' in line 7 is incorrectly spelt. The correct spelling is

- A probably
- B probaly
- C proberly
- D probably

13 Which line has an extra word included in it by mistake?

- A line 4
- B line 8
- C line 11
- D line 12

14 Paragraph 3 needs punctuating. The correct punctuation should be

- A the management of Variant ever look? At the
- B for other PCs. Most other systems
- C for other PCs? Most other systems
- D most other systems? With the same

15 It has been decided to add the sentence: 'However, the current price of £1,400 is just ridiculous.' The best place to add it would be

- A at the end of paragraph 1
- B at the end of paragraph 2
- C at the end of paragraph 3
- D at the end of paragraph 4

Example of a functional English reading question at Level 1

Read Text A and answer questions 1 – 7.

Text A

You are interested in growing your own vegetables. You find this webpage on the Internet.
<http://www.salinasvegetablegarden.com> (the page looks like a webpage)

Salina's Vegetable Garden

HOME	Welcome to my Vegetable Garden. I set up the Vegetable Garden over 10 years ago because I am passionate about growing vegetables without the use of chemicals (organically) and respecting the environment. Everything you buy from my vegetable garden has been grown organically.
ORGANIC TIPS	<p>I believe in gardening organically for a number of reasons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • pouring chemicals over products that we eat is an unhealthy thing to do • growing vegetables organically uses less energy and produces less waste • using chemicals on crops has a negative effect on the local bird and wildlife population • encouraging others to grow their own vegetables organically will be doing my bit for the local community, the local bird and wildlife population.
GROW YOUR OWN	
VEG	
HERBS	
FRUIT	In addition organic gardening is good for you . It gets you out in the fresh air and it's good exercise. You can meet new friends. It can save you money. You don't have to travel to buy your vegetables or stand in a queue for hours. You can grow what you want and you are doing your bit for the environment. NOT TO MENTION HOW MUCH BETTER ORGANICALLY GROWN VEGETABLES TASTE!
SALINA'S UPDATES	On this website you can find everything you need to know about growing your own vegetables or buying organic produce. Simply click on the links on the left-hand side.
SHEDS	Or if you would prefer to visit us in person come to our centre (open 9.00am to 9.00pm daily) near Estrick for free friendly advice. Click on this link for directions to our centre.
SEEDS	YOU CAN BUY ANYTHING FROM A POTATO TO A SIT-ON LAWN MOWER EITHER AT OUR CENTRE OR ONLINE!
TOOLS	Salina
CONTACT US	

Answer questions 1 to 3 with a cross in the box you think is correct. If you change your mind about an answer, put a line through the box and then mark your new answer with a cross.

1 The **main** purpose of this webpage is to:

A	inform the reader of the opening/closing times of Salina's Vegetable Garden	<input type="checkbox"/>
B	tell the reader how long Salina's Vegetable Garden has been in business	<input type="checkbox"/>
C	persuade the reader of the benefits of using organic products	<input type="checkbox"/>
D	tell the reader how to get to Estrick	<input type="checkbox"/>

(Total for Question 1 = 1 mark)

2 Salina's Vegetable Garden produce has all been grown:

A	in different countries	<input type="checkbox"/>
B	without using chemicals	<input type="checkbox"/>
C	using good quality fertilizer	<input type="checkbox"/>
D	by experienced staff	<input type="checkbox"/>

(Total for Question 2 = 1 mark)

3 Which of these statements about Salina's Vegetable Garden Centre is true?

A	It is in the centre of Estrick.	<input type="checkbox"/>
B	It sells bird food.	<input type="checkbox"/>
C	It offers advice free of charge.	<input type="checkbox"/>
D	It has been open nearly 1 year.	<input type="checkbox"/>

(Total for Question 3 = 1 mark)

4 Give **one** way you can buy goods from Salina's Vegetable Garden. You do **not** need to write in sentences.

.....

(Total for Question 4 = 1 mark)

5 Give **two** reasons why Salina thinks gardening organically is good for the environment. You do **not** need to write in sentences.

1

.....

2

.....

(Total for Question 5 = 2 marks)

6 Using the information in Text A, find **two** things you can buy from Salina's Vegetable Garden. You do **not** need to write in sentences.

1

.....

2

.....

...
(Total for Question 6 = 2 marks)

According to Text A, organic gardening can be good for you personally. Give **two** ways organic gardening can be good for you, according to Text A. You do **not** need to write in sentences.

1

.....

2

.....

...
(Total for Question 7 = 2 marks)

TOTAL FOR SECTION A = 10 MARKS

Example of a functional English Writing question at level 1

You will be assessed on spelling, punctuation and grammar in both tasks.

Task 1

Information

A local charity shop is looking for someone to help out at weekends. You are interested in applying. The notice in the window looks like this:

WANTED!

Hard working, honest person needed to help out at weekends. Must be able to follow instructions and get on well with people. Please write a letter of application, explaining why you would be suitable to work in this charity shop.

Manager, Helpaid Shop, Anytown, BL3 1LT

Writing Task

Write a letter of application, explaining why you would be a suitable person to work in this charity shop. In your letter, explain:

- why you are interested in helping in the charity shop
- what experience and skills you can bring to the job
- why you think you are the right person to help out.

Remember to set out your letter correctly. (15)

Task 2

Information

You use the bus to travel to school / college / work. Recently the bus service has been very unreliable and sometimes the bus has not come at all. This has often made you late for school/college/work. You have a bus pass with the bus company details on the back:

Faster Buses

Getting you there is our business!

Manager: Simon Griffiths

email: simon.griffiths@fasterbuses.com

Writing Task

Write an email to Simon Griffiths, the manager of the bus company, to complain. You may wish to include:

- what is wrong with the bus service
- the problems this has caused you at school/college/work
- what you want him to do about this situation. (10)

Example of SfL / KS ICT question at Level 1

Questions 23 to 28 are about this database.

Staff code	Male/female	Title	First name	Last name	Employment started	Section code
FAF142	F	Miss	Freda	Andrews	03/02/01	F1
LBF126	F	Ms	Lucy	Barclay	17/06/97	F1
LBF127	F	Mrs	Lucy	Barclay	18/06/97	F1
FDF121	M	Mr	Frank	Daly	15/11/92	F1
FDC213	M	Mr	Fred	Donaldson	06/03/91	C2
SSC111	M	Dr	Simon	Sherlock	12/01/90	C1
SSC244	F	Dr	Susan	Smithson	11/05/01	C2

23 The search criterion to find all Female members of staff is

- A Title = "Mrs"
- B Male/Female = "F"
- C Title = "Miss" & "Mrs"
- D Section Code = "F1"

24 The search criterion to find all employees whose employment started before 1997 is

- A Employment Started = 1997
- B Employment Started > 01/01/97
- C Employment Started < 01/01/97
- D Employment Started = "before 1997"

25 To list staff in order of First Name so that Frank is first, the user should

1. A sort descending on First Name
2. B sort descending on Last Name
3. C sort ascending on Last Name
4. D sort ascending on First Name

26 The data type in the Staff Code field is

- A currency
- B number
- C date
- D text

27 Employees are graded A1, A2, A3 or A4. To add each employee's grade to the database, the user should add a

- A criterion
- B record
- C field
- D row

28 The male in section F1 started employment on

- A 17/06/97
- B 03/02/01
- C 18/06/97
- D 15/11/92

Question 29 is a general question.

- 29** To help keep sensitive computer-based information confidential, the user should
- A** save the file
 - B** set up a password
 - C** make a backup copy
 - D** use a virus protection program

Example of functional skills ICT question at Level 1

A data file is downloaded from the awarding organisation.

Background

Numbers of wild birds seen in gardens have been falling. Experts want to know if the numbers have changed this year. They need data to update the information. Volunteers will count birds in their gardens.

Getting Started

The **Data Files** folder in your user area contains all the files you need for this test. These are:

- ResponsesJunL1
- BirdTextL1
- BirdNumbersL1
- ImagesJunL1

Mark Allocation

The marks for the test will be allocated as follows:

Section A	Task 1	4 marks
Section B	Task 2	20 marks
	Task 3	18 marks
	Task 4	6 marks
	Task 5	2 marks
Total		50 marks

Complete ALL tasks.

Section B covers tasks 2–5 in the test.

You may use the internet for this section only.

Task 1 – What is the length of a chaffinch?

Volunteers need to identify chaffinches for the data collection. Open the document **ResponsesJunL1**. Enter your name, candidate number and centre number. Use an internet search engine to find the length of a chaffinch. Show how you did this by:

- taking a screen shot of the search engine page you used showing the text you typed in
- pasting the screen shot into ResponsesJunL1
- completing the table in ResponsesJunL1.
Resave the file ResponsesJunL1 for use in Section B, Task 3.

(Total for Task 1 = 4 marks)

TOTAL FOR SECTION A = 4 MARKS

You must not use the internet for the rest of the test.

Evidence

A printout of the document **ResponsesJunL1**.

Section B

You must not use the internet from this point onwards.

Task 2 – Numbers of birds

The file **BirdNumbersL1** shows the number of wild birds seen in a garden in 1998 and 2008.

(a) Open the file **BirdNumbersL1**.

Enter your name, candidate number and centre number in the footer. The number of starlings seen in 1998 was **15** and in 2008, the number was **4**. Enter this information on to the spreadsheet. **(3)**

(b) Use a formula to calculate the fall in numbers between 1998 and 2008 for each bird. Make sure the information is clear and easy to read. **(7)**

Evidence

A printout of your spreadsheet showing the **data**.

A printout of your spreadsheet showing the **formulae** you used.

Remember

Check that your name, candidate number and centre number are on each printout. Resave the file.

(c) Create a line graph to compare the 1998 and 2008 data for all birds. Make sure the graph is clearly labelled and easy to understand.

Evidence

A printout of your line graph.

Remember

Check that your name, candidate number and centre number are on each printout. Save the line graph. **(10)**

(Total for Task 2 = 20 marks)

Task 3 – Recording numbers of birds

Volunteers will record the numbers of 5 wild birds they might see in their gardens.

(a) Create a data collection form to record their findings. The form must include:

- **the text from BirdTextL1**
- **the length of a chaffinch, which you found in Task 1**
- **appropriate images selected from ImagesJunL1. Use this plan to help you create your form:**

TITLE FROM TEXT FILE
INFORMATION FROM TEXT FILE
TABLE FOR BIRD NAME AND LENGTH, PICTURE and NUMBER SEEN

The data collection form must be clear and suitable for the volunteers to use. Volunteers

need to be able to:

- **identify the birds**
- **enter the number seen.**

The form should fit on **one A4 page**.

Enter your name, candidate number and centre number in the footer.

Save the data collection form using a meaningful file name. **(16)**

Evidence

A printout of your data collection form.

Remember Check that your name, candidate number and centre number are on the printout.

(b) Make the data collection form **read only**, so that people can look at it but cannot change it.

Produce a screen shot showing that you have made the file read only. Save the screen shot using a meaningful file name. **(2)**

Evidence

A printout of your screen shot.

Remember

Check that your name, candidate number and centre number are on the printout.

(Total for Task 3 = 18 marks)

Task 4 – Email your data collection form

You must **not** use the internet for this task.

Your data collection form will be emailed to Kate Hudson, Secretary of The Garden Bird Survey. Prepare an email to Kate. Include a message to ask Kate what she thinks of your data collection form. Attach a copy of your data collection form.

Kate's email address is: kate.hudson1@birdsurvey2011.com

Produce a screen shot showing the email you have prepared. Save the screen shot using a meaningful file name.

Evidence

A printout of the screen shot showing your email. Make sure it shows the email address, the subject, the message and the attachment.

Remember

Check that your name, candidate number and centre number are on the printout.

(Total for Task 4 = 6 marks)

Task 5 – Save your work

Make sure that you have saved all the files you have created or edited.

Produce a screen shot showing the files you have created or edited and where they are stored. Save the screen shot using a meaningful file name.

Evidence

A printout of your screen shot showing the files you have created or edited and where they are stored.

Remember

Check that your name, candidate number and centre number are on the printout.

(Total for Task 5 = 2 marks)

Appendix 3

Example case studies from LSIS Action Research Projects

All these case studies are on the Excellence Gateway workroom: Initial assessment of functional skills. You have to be a member to access them, but this is straightforward.

<http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/workrooms/19574>

Planning for initial assessment of functional skills – the Bridgwater College

An entry-level initial assessment tool for functional English

Creating a functional English initial assessment based on English tasks at Entry 2 covering listening, reading and writing skills in a problem-solving way and comparing it with the adult literacy core curriculum standards at Entry 2.

East Berkshire College

Developing an initial assessment tool for functional English

Using a written assessment at Level 1 based on a vocational topic to encourage vocational teachers to get more involved with assessment for functional skills.

Ellington Extended Services

Designing an initial functional mathematics assessment for ESOL learners

Developing a functional skills assessment using the functional skills standards as a basis, directly involving both staff and learners, and building on Skills for Life good practice.

Northumberland Adult Learning Service

Developing a functional ICT initial assessment

Developing an initial assessment tool based round a work-related scenario for learners in Motor Vehicle Maintenance and Construction plus a screening tool for use at first contact to identify if the learner has enough skills to take part in the assessment.

University College Birmingham

Initial assessment tool for functional Mathematics

Creating an initial assessment tool for Level 1 functional mathematics, which was trialled with a few students and revised following comments from the students and the member of staff who administered the assessment to make it easy and quick to administer to a group.

Worcester Sixth Form College

Trialling an online initial assessment tool

Trialling a range of initial and diagnostic assessment tools to find out whether using an online initial assessment tool would contribute to assessment profiling of students; help planning to meet students' needs; help students to achieve the functional skills learning outcomes; resolve administrative difficulties.

Other sample case studies can be found at on the archived Functional Skills Support Programme site

<http://collections.europarchive.org/tna/20100711211239/http://www.fssupport.org/resources/developmentprojects>

Two to consider are:

New College Durham

'A Problem-Solving Initial Assessment Task – Make A Hamburger.

New College is one of the leading colleges of further and higher education in the north-east and one of the top 10 per cent of colleges nationally, with strong vocational and adult programmes. Its offshoot, Durham Solutions, provides training to local employers. New College has developed an initial assessment screening to help learners discover their problem-solving strengths and weaknesses and start to build further functionality. The screening is generic and does not rely on any one of the three functional skills but, rather, on a functional approach.

Bromley Functional Skills Consortium

Bromley College and Orpington College worked together to develop a tool for the initial assessment of the writing component of functional English. The tool comprises the assessment and a clear guide to marking, levelling for all levels of functional English and moving on. This case study is no longer accessible through the archived FSSP site and so a scanned copy has been placed in the Excellence Gateway Initial Assessment workroom.

<http://archive.excellencegateway.org.uk/page.aspx?o=workrooms-view&id=556>

Appendix 4

Using sort cards for self-assessment

Self-assessment cards were designed for functional skills learners to use as part of an initial assessment process. They are part of a *Being functional* resource which builds on effective practice to support the planning and delivery of functional skills. For more information about *Being functional*, go to www.excellencegateway.org.uk/beingfunctional.

For a set of the cards plus instructions, go to <http://tlp.excellencegateway.org.uk/tlp/fs/fs-resources/assets/CPD1/Functional%20skills%20self-assessment%20cards.pdf>

Self-assessment card sort activity

Self-assessment is vital for learners at all stages of their learning journey. Some learners may have some idea of where their strengths and weaknesses lie so it makes sense to ask them about these. Some learners will be less aware and will need support to recognise where their skills are in relation to criteria such as those in functional skills. All learners will benefit from developing their ability to carry out self-assessment as it is a valuable and transferable skill that will enhance their learning, work (or employability skills) and everyday life.

It is also useful to explore with learners what they consider their needs to be and their level of confidence in using functional skills. Even if a learner has little awareness of their level of skill in using functional English, functional mathematics and functional ICT, the individual's own views and perceptions are an important dimension in the overall picture.

Self-assessment, as with any other technique, is unlikely to be enough on its own – learners may over- or under-estimate their skills. Indeed, self-assessment is often most effective if it forms a starting point for discussion. Self-assessment, peer assessment and reflection are all vital 'assessment for learning' strategies.

The self-assessment cards

The pack <http://tlp.excellencegateway.org.uk/tlp/fs/fs-resources/assets/CPD1/Functional%20skills%20self-assessment%20cards.pdf> contains a series of card sets that you can use to support self-assessment:

- two sets relevant to all functional skills ('Problem solving' and 'Being functional'); and
- three sets, each addressing one of the individual functional skills ('Functional English', 'Functional mathematics' and 'Functional ICT').

You can use the card sorts in several ways, such as:

- on a one-to-one basis with a learner (for example, during a visit to their workplace);
- asking the learner to use them independently and then discuss the results with you;
- asking pairs of learners to work through them together;
- in a group session, with each learner having their own set. If you do this, you will still need time to discuss results with learners individually. This would be a good way to introduce self-assessment strategies to learners and encourage them to complete the card sort more independently; or
- as an icebreaker in a CPD session to check participants' understanding of functional skills, or for participants to check their own level of skills in relation to problem-solving and being functional.

You are likely to spend at least half an hour on a card sort. You may wish to work through the cards across a number of sessions. This could be achieved by taking a selection from all the categories, or focusing on one category in each session. There must be time to discuss the choices made by learners. You may need to prompt learners through effective questioning to think about how these skills, especially problem-solving skills, can be transferred to other contexts.

You may find that the techniques and skills explained in the Motivational Dialogue resource (such as effective questioning, reflective listening and affirmation) will support you in facilitating this activity and the subsequent discussion:

<http://tlp.excellencegateway.org.uk/tlp/personalisation/md/resource/#content.php>

What the card sort contains

- Heading cards: 'Always', 'Sometimes' and 'Hardly ever'.
- Cards with statements about functional skills in five categories:
 - Functional English
 - Functional mathematics
 - Functional ICT
 - Problem solving
 - Being functional.

The self-assessment sort cards include a set of instructions for learners. Note that there are also blank cards which you can use to add further statements appropriate to your learners and the vocational areas and community in which they apply their skills. An example record sheet is also provided as part of the *Being functional* online resource, but you could ask your learners to create their own so that functional English, mathematics and ICT are all demonstrated within the activity itself:

Each card provides a statement relating to the functional skills standards and sometimes to a specific context. These can be adapted or extended to personalise

them for different learners. You may wish to work with vocational / apprenticeship teachers to prepare contextualised statements for the cards.

The number of cards used in the activity will depend on the length of the session, the initial assessment needs of the learners and their engagement with the activity.

Wherever possible you should adapt the cards to meet the vocational or life experiences of your learners. For example, reference to a bank statement could be altered to a shopping receipt.

You may wish to change some of the language on the cards. However, learners will need to recognise and understand the functional skills terminology, so it may be better to check their understanding of key words prior to carrying out the activity (such as 'solution', 'resource', 'email', 'estimate' or 'confident'). You might check this understanding by asking the learners as a group to give examples from their own experience relating to these terms.

If you need to check that the text you have written is appropriate for your learners' reading level, you can use the following guidance on readability, which includes a SMOG (Simplified Measure of Gobbledegook) Calculator to check the readability level of your text:

www.niace.org.uk/current-work/readability

www.niace.org.uk/misc/SMOG-calculator/smogcalc.php#

The cards provide a range of generic and contextualised statements. The words in italics provide examples of how you can contextualise the statements to suit the individual needs and experiences of your learners. You can help learners to understand the statements and appreciate how the skills can be transferred to different situations by suggesting examples that relate to their own experiences.

You may also wish to add or adapt statements so that they are relevant to the individual needs of learners with learning difficulties and / or disabilities. For example, learners with a visual impairment or dyslexia may need the font size or the colour of the paper changed to improve readability.

If these adaptations are needed, you may also wish to reflect on how the activity itself is carried out to meet their needs. For example, learners with speech impediments may lack confidence when working in pairs or groups and may need more teacher attention and support. Some learners may find that working in a pair to share similar experiences can help bring mutual concerns to light, or identify common barriers to learning functional skills. However, the same learners might not be comfortable with or confident in sharing experiences with a wider group. These are just a few suggestions of things to consider when identifying the individual needs of your learners and choosing the best method to carry out the self-assessment card sort activity.

Using the card sort to support initial assessment of functional skills

The card sort activity was originally designed to be used as part of early

assessments. It has been adapted to support the delivery of functional skills and can also be used to determine a starting point for a learner's individual learning plan (ILP), to introduce functional skills as a central part of the learners' programme and to establish learners as partners in the learning process. This self-assessment works best as a basis for discussion with learners on perceived strengths, weaknesses and needs, and their confidence in using their functional English, functional mathematics and functional ICT. Although it cannot directly determine levels, this activity has several important benefits for learners developing their functional skills as the cards can be adapted for different contexts and for individual learners.

- The card sort appeals to learners who dislike or perform poorly at paper-based tests.
- It raises the application of skills explicitly.
- It differentiates confidence and competence.
- Further, it considers the functional approach: problem-solving, decision-making, independence and self-management.

Before carrying out the activity, particularly for the first time, consider providing some background information for learners. It will give the activity more relevance if learners are clear on the context in which the cards are used and how the results will benefit them. Think about including an introduction which will answer the following questions, or any others your learners might ask:

- Why do this activity?
- Why do this activity now?
- What are the benefits of this activity?

How to use the card sorts

- Begin by laying out the three heading cards ('Always', 'Sometimes' and 'Hardly ever') in front of the learner or ask them to do this.
- Shuffle all the other cards and put them in a pile face down.
- Ask the learner to turn over the top card. Is this statement always true for them, sometimes true or hardly ever true? They should put the card below the relevant heading card, 'Always', 'Sometimes' or 'Hardly ever'.
- Do the same with the other cards, so that the learner builds up three columns or piles of cards. Discuss issues that arise along the way. You could, for example:
 - ask why the learner made a specific choice;

- ask supplementary questions such as ‘How would you do this?’;
- give the learner a specific example and ask them to demonstrate or provide evidence (whether from their learning, work, home or everyday life) of how they would approach, execute or achieve it;
- when using the problem-solving cards, discuss with learners the kind of problems you are talking about;
- make links to other functional skills or life skills;
- discuss with the learner why they put each card where they did. (What could they do that would enable them to move more cards to the ‘Always’ pile?); and
- record the results.

Recording learner decisions

Recording the results will allow you to review this with learners later, or to explore and review their progress on a regular basis. You may wish to ask learners to develop their own record sheets to ensure that functional English, mathematics and ICT are demonstrated within the activity itself. Alternatively, examples are available to download from the online resource: <http://tlp.excellencegateway.org.uk/tlp/fs/fs-resources>

In addition to indicating the appropriate heading, you may ask the learners to record and explain their decisions before providing examples of evidence.




Self-assessment card sort activity - instructions for learners

- Take the three heading cards (‘Always’, ‘Sometimes’ and ‘Hardly ever’). Lay them out on the table in a row.
- Shuffle all the other cards that your teacher has given you. Put them in a pile so that they are face down.
- Turn over the top card. Think about how true the statement is for you. Is it always true? Sometimes true? Or hardly ever true? Put the statement card below the right heading card for you.
- Do the same with the other cards until you have looked at all of them. If you are not sure about anything, ask your teacher.
- Make a record of your results.
- When you have looked at all the cards, think about why you put them under

each heading. It might help to talk about your choices with someone else. Ask your teacher or someone who works with you.

- How did you make your choice? Can you think of any examples to show that you have chosen the right heading? Think about your work, or perhaps life at home.
 - What can you do next? What could you do to help you put more cards under the heading 'Always'?
-
- Make a record of your results.

PowerPoint slides



Support for English, maths and ESOL

Module 9
Improving initial and diagnostic assessment for functional skills


Activity 1: Starter task



Design the perfect learner



Aim



To explore initial and diagnostic assessment within functional skills

Outcomes



By the end of the training session, participants will have:

1. Discussed the purpose of initial and diagnostic assessment within functional skills
2. Clarified the differences between the initial and diagnostic assessment of functional skills and key skills
3. Identified a range of approaches to the initial and diagnostic assessment of functional skills
4. Developed an awareness of the importance of communicating initial and diagnostic assessment information across learners' whole programme of study

Introductions



What expertise do you have on your table?

- Use HO 3 to note the expertise you have in functional skills, key skills, Skills for Life, English, maths or ESOL – are there other areas of expertise we should note?
- What specific expertise do you have in initial and diagnostic assessment?

What is the purpose and value of initial and diagnostic assessment?



In your table groups

- Discuss what the purpose is
- Come up with a phrase which sums this up
- Note these on HO 4 (one per table)

Snowball

- Pass your handout to the next table who can add anything extra. Continue to pass around, share and add until you get your original sheet back.

Initial and diagnostic assessment



- **Initial assessment** involves finding out the learner's level to help them choose an appropriate programme
- **Diagnostic assessment** is about identifying a learner's specific needs
- Usually initial assessment and diagnostic assessment are separate processes, but...

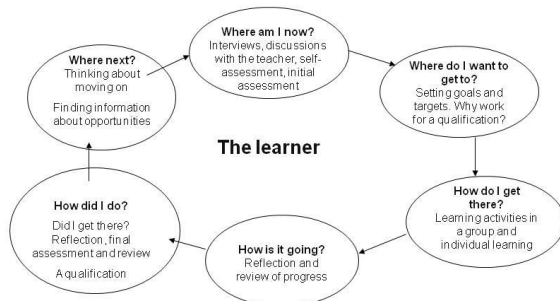
The role of initial and diagnostic assessment



Initial and diagnostic assessment:

- help to establish whether the learner is on the right programme
- help to establish the level of functionality and autonomy
- help you and the learner to negotiate and agree an individual learning plan
- begin the process of building a relationship
- are early steps in a continuing process of assessment for learning
- are not one-off events – they are part of an ongoing process

The learner journey



Adapted from: *Planning Learning and Recording Progress and Achievement* (DfES 2003)

What are functional skills?



Functional skills are the fundamental, applied skills in English, mathematics, and information and communication technology (ICT) which help people to gain the most from life, learning and work.

Criteria for functional skills qualifications (Ofqual/12/5127)

Factors affecting the level of demand



- Complexity
- Technical demand
- Familiarity
- Independence (autonomy)

Initial and diagnostic assessment



What models do you use in your centre?

What other models are you aware of?

Methods of initial and diagnostic assessment



- Documents
- Self-assessment
- Discussions
- Assessment tools
- Structured activities
- Observation

Factors for a positive experience of initial and diagnostic assessment



The assessment...

- involves learners – doing it 'with them' not 'to them'
- supports learners' self-esteem and sense of self-worth
- recognises strengths and achievements, not just areas for development
- links to learners' aspirations and their context for learning

The expectations we have of learners



A recent expert review (2011) looking at educational expectations commented:

"...our existing assessment model assumes that a certain proportion of young people will never be able to master crucial curriculum content, leading to an unjustified lowering of expectations."

"...evidence identifies the higher expectations of pupils in mathematics, English and science in high performing (countries)."

Spiky profiles



Every learner is an individual and has:

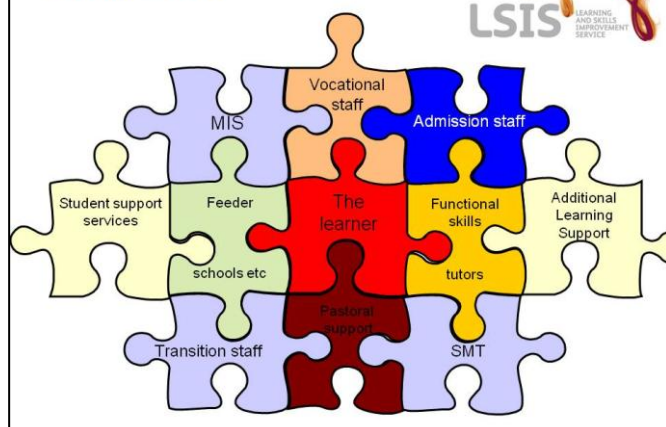
- gaps
- strengths
- history
- learning preferences

Spiky profiles: activity



- Review your model of initial assessment in light of a learner with a spiky profile.
- Does it highlight his / her issues?
- Do you need to make any changes or additions?
- Amend HO 8 as appropriate.

Communication



Giving feedback from initial and diagnostic assessment



Research identifies that effective assessment feedback can raise achievement when it is:

- timely
- positive
- involving the learner
- specific
- focusing on things that the learner can change
- moving forward

Aim



To explore initial and diagnostic assessment within functional skills

Learning outcomes



Have we:

- Discussed the purpose of initial and diagnostic assessment within functional skills
- Clarified the differences between the initial and diagnostic assessment and of functional skills and key skills
- Identified a range of approaches to the initial and diagnostic assessment of functional skills
- Developed an awareness of the importance of communicating initial and diagnostic assessment information across learners' whole programme of study?

Next steps



Write on a sticky note one thing you will take from today's session and apply either in your own practice, or within your institution.

You can also make a note of further CPD needs if you wish.

Put your note on the wall and have a look at what others have written.