

Trainer pack

Improving initial and diagnostic assessment for functional skills

Module 8

Course information **Length of session:** 3-5 hours, depending on activities required by participants. Trainers can customise, shorten and lengthen the session to suit the audiences and settings. The session as it stands is intended to be 4 hours 20 minutes long.

Audience **Job roles:** Practitioners who are teaching or supporting functional skills development on embedded and discrete programmes. May also be useful for managers when planning functional skills programmes or programmes which require functional skills, e.g. apprenticeships, so that they can explore the challenges of the initial assessment of functional skills.

Sector / setting: FE, work-based learning and adult and community learning

Note to trainer – terminology

Several terms are in current use for describing adult literacy, language and numeracy. These include basic skills (a term still used in some settings); adult literacy, language and numeracy – variously abbreviated to LLN, ALN, ALAN; and Skills for Life. The term ‘English, maths and ESOL’ will replace these terms, but expect participants to use terms with which they are familiar. Note that some sources of information used in this training employ previously current terminology.

Note – handouts and resources

All handouts and resources are included at the end of this document, for ease of printing. A separate participant pack is also available.

Aim

To explore initial and diagnostic assessment within functional skills

Outcomes

By the end of the session participants will have:

- Discussed the purpose of initial and diagnostic assessment within functional skills;
- Clarified the differences between the initial and diagnostic assessment of functional skills and key skills;
- Identified a range of approaches to the initial and diagnostic assessment of functional skills; and

- Developed an awareness of the importance of communicating initial and diagnostic assessment information across learners' whole programme of study.

Module overview

Activity		Content
1	Starter: Design the perfect learner	Mini brainstorm – to get participants thinking creatively and positively.
2	Aims and objectives	Outline of the session.
3	Introductions linked to initial assessment activity	To introduce each other and the session. Finding out what expertise is in the room. The reflection log.
4	Purpose of initial assessment and diagnostic assessment	Discussion to list purposes of initial and diagnostic assessment and the introduction to the idea that initial and diagnostic assessment need to consider more than technical skills. Individual shares with table colleagues then snowball around all tables.
5	The learning cycle and the learner journey – initial assessment and diagnostic assessment links to the programme of study	Linking initial and diagnostic assessment to the whole learning journey and how initial assessment can support the learner throughout their journey.
6	Why are initial assessment / diagnostic assessment different in functional skills?	Four level differentiators. What is functionality? Problem-solving approaches.
7	What does good practice in initial assessment and diagnostic assessment look like? Different models	A discussion covering what is available and whether they conduct initial and / or diagnostic assessment of functional skills. Opening up the discussion as to what good practice might look like.
8	Developing a model for initial and diagnostic assessment	Using resources to put together an initial / diagnostic assessment model for the participant's centre.
9	Let's not forget the learner	Spiky profile – highlighting personal learning.
10	Communicating initial assessment to all	Promote effective collaboration between vocational / other and functional skills practitioners for

	areas of a learner's programme – links to the ILP	functional skills assessment and target setting.
11	Top tips for initial assessment / diagnostic assessment in functional skills	Top tips sheet – what will work for them – what else would they add?
12	Signposting to other resources	Useful websites and other sources of support and information. Sharing activity.
13	Summary and review of the day	Action planning.

Trainers

Trainer experience or qualifications required

Trainers must have experience of: key skills, Skills for Life, functional skills and the initial assessment and diagnostic assessment of each. They should also have experience of a range of assessment tools and methodologies.

Reference material for trainers

Trainer notes
See also resource list below.

Resources

Resources for reference during the session

Trainer notes

Teaching and learning functional English, FSSP, 2009
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>

Being functional – Excellence Gateway site, with a library of resources and a CPD programme focused on

'Assessment for learning'. This has a number of useful resources attached to it, including self-assessment sort cards, top tips, etc.

<http://tlp.excellencegateway.org.uk/tlp/fs/fs-resources/index.php>

For general guidance on functional skills, the *Functional Skills Starter Kit* will be published in May 2012. There is also an assessment starter kit. See them from this link:

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

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

Teaching and learning problem solving, KSSP, 2005

Available at:

<http://archive.excellencegateway.org.uk/page.aspx?o=224134>

Level Crossing activities, KSSP

Available at:

<http://archive.excellencegateway.org.uk/page.aspx?o=195646>

Some trainers may have the original hard copies of these materials. If not they are available online and a selection could be downloaded and printed for use in the activity.

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

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

There is also a shorter version of the sort cards which could be produced for each table.

You wouldn't expect a maths teacher to teach plastering...., NRDC, 2006

Available at:

http://www.nrdc.org.uk/publications_details.asp?ID=73

Initial and diagnostic assessment: a learner-centred process, LSIS, 2008

Available at:

<http://sflip.excellencegateway.org.uk/pdf/4.2sflguidance3.pdf>

Tools Library, LSIS

Available at:

http://archive.excellencegateway.org.uk/page.aspx?o=to_olslibrary Skills for Life initial and diagnostic assessment tools, including contextualised assessments.

Guidance booklets about all stages of assessment, LSIS
<http://sflip.excellencegateway.org.uk/resources/assessmentguidance.aspx>

Functional skills starter kit, LSIS, 2012

Available from

<http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/node/20280>

Functional skills guide, AELP, 2012

Available from:

<http://www.aelp.org.uk/news/general/details/moving-from-key-skills-to-functional-skills-a-step/>

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>

English and maths in Apprenticeships – no change to SASE, AELP, 2011

Available if you are an AELP member at:

<http://www.aelp.org.uk/news/general/details/english-and-maths-in-apprenticeships-no-change-to/>

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>

Pre-course activity for participants

None

Useful websites

See Resources handout (HO 12)

Before the session the trainer needs to:

Resources carousel. Collect a set of samples of initial and diagnostic assessment tools for the carousel activity in TN 8. See HO 6b for suggestions and TN 8 resource suggestions; you may have other ideas to add to this list. Note that some of the most popular materials are commercially developed and you may need access permission from publishers to demonstrate these. Some materials are online and you will need the appropriate facilities to demonstrate these.

Starter activity placed on tables – one **HO 2 Your table** activity sheet per table.

Prepare a copy of the learner journey diagram for TN 5 if you think it may be needed for an inexperienced audience. The diagram can be found on this link: <http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/node/1152>

Prepare participants packs. Note that the participant pack has copies of all handouts and 4 appendices, as well as PowerPoint notes.

Set up PowerPoint.

A flip chart to 'park' / record questions may be useful.

Session plan

Aim

To explore initial and diagnostic assessment within functional skills

Outcomes

By the end of the session participants will have:

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

Suggested timings are for guidance purposes only. Trainers should adapt content to meet the needs and experience levels of the participants.

TN – trainer notes HO – handout R – resources PPT – PowerPoint

Time	Content	Resources		
		No.	Style	Title
20m	TN 1 Introductions and starter activity: Design the perfect learner In groups at tables participants discuss and note (creatively) the skills and attributes of a perfect learner. After 10 minutes have the tables share their findings.	PPT 1-2 Flipchart paper and pens HO 1	Discussion on tables Round up of discussion on flip chart Handout	 Design the perfect learner
<i>(Total 20m)</i>	The trainer should note some of the recurring factors highlighted			

Time	Content	Resources		
		No.	Style	Title
	by the groups.			
10m (30m)	TN 2. Aims and outcomes Outline aim and outcomes for the day. Introduce the reflection sheet HO 2.	PPT 3-4 HO 2	Presentation Flip chart and sticky notes to note or park any questions Handout	Aims and outcomes Reflection log
20m (Total 50m)	TN 3. Introductions Ask participants to introduce themselves and share what specific expertise they have in initial and diagnostic assessment of learners. Ask them to note this on HO 3. Find out about the audience	PPT 5 HO 3 Appendix 1: overview of initial and diagnostic assessment	Handout Discussion 5-page overview	Introduction Your table handout – one per table Identifying a learner's starting point
25m (Total 1h 15m)	TN 4. Purpose of initial assessment and diagnostic assessment Discussion of the purpose of initial assessment and diagnostic assessment.	PPT 6-8 HO 4	Discussion Snowballing activity Handout	Purpose of initial and diagnostic assessment
20m (1h 45m)	TN 5. The learner journey – initial assessment and diagnostic assessment links to the programme of study A quick activity to remind participants that initial assessment isn't just a one-off activity – but occurs throughout a learner's journey	PPT 9 HO 4 used in last activity – now completed Scissors		A diagram of the learner journey may be put in the pack by the trainer if it is felt to be appropriate Flipchart paper and pens
30m	TN 6. How initial assessment and diagnostic assessment are different in functional skills than in Skills for Life / key skills Looking at the differences: Clarify what we are talking about	PPT 10-11 HO 5	Slides Handout	Definition of functional skills / level of demand What makes functional

Time	Content	Resources		
		No.	Style	Title
(Total 2h 05m)	<p>– PPT 10</p> <p>Factors affecting level of demand: PPT 11</p> <p>Discussing assessment</p> <p>Pull out the key differences and implications for initial assessment</p>	Appendix 2: sample test papers	Handout	<p>skills different?</p> <p>Assessments</p> <p>Whiteboard if online awarding organisation assessments are to be viewed</p>
30m	<p>TN 7. What does good practice in initial assessment and diagnostic assessment of functional skills look like? Models available.</p> <p>Ask the tables to quickly note all the initial assessment and diagnostic assessment models they are aware of – use HO 6a. Draw up a full list from the front – note these on a flip chart. HO 6b has some examples of tools. HO 6c is an example of diagnostic assessment record sheet.</p> <p>PowerPoint presentation to summarise.</p> <p>Work through HO 7 to gather information about each tool (note that this handout will be referred to in a later activity).</p>	<p>PPT 12-13</p> <p>HO 6a HO 6b</p> <p>HO 6c</p> <p>HO 7</p> <p>Appendix 3</p>	<p>Slides</p> <p>Handout</p> <p>Handout</p> <p>Handout</p> <p>Handout</p> <p>Flipchart</p>	<p>Initial assessment tools (HO 6a blank, HO 6b including some available tools)</p> <p>Example diagnostic assessment summary</p> <p>Methods of IA</p> <p>Case studies</p>
(Total 2h 35m)	<p>PPT 12-13 – a discussion of the factors needed for a positive experience of initial and diagnostic assessment and the importance of having high expectations of learners.</p>			
30 min	<p>TN 8. Developing an initial and diagnostic assessment model</p> <p>Putting together tools to make a coherent package of initial and</p>	HO 8	Handout	<p>What do the criteria tell us we need to initial assessment?</p>

Time	Content	Resources		
		No.	Style	Title
(Total 3h 05m)	diagnostic assessment for their learners.	Appendix 4:	Carousel activity of assessment resources Handout	Samples of initial and diagnostic assessment tools Self-assessment sort cards – instructions
15m (Total 3h 20m)	TN 9. Let's not forget the learner - spiky profiles and self-assessment Quick discussion about individual learners needs.	PPT 16-17	Handout	Spiky profiles
15m (Total 3h 35m)	TN 10. Communicating initial assessment and diagnostic assessment information to all areas of a learner's programme – links to the ILP Consideration of who needs to be actively involved in the initial assessment process. Participants need to be aware that they must have the buy-in of the learner for initial assessment to be effective. This should also include a reference to communicating with the learner.	PPT 18-19 HO 9	Slides Handout	Communication and giving feedback Communication - jigsaw activity
30m	TN 11. Top tips for initial assessment and diagnostic assessment of functional skills Ask participants to look back at their reflection sheets and the activities carried out. Ask them to put together a list of 5 top tips or action points. Share these top tips around the room, then give out HO 10 and ask them to add any new ones to	HO 10	Resource	Top tips sheet

Time	Content	Resources		
		No.	Style	Title
(Total 4h 05m)	the list. Share these across the groups to develop a comprehensive top tips list for participants to take away.			
10m (Total 4h 10m)	TN 12. Signposting to other resources Indicate where each of the documents used came from, plus other relevant websites too.	HO 11 Sticky notes	Handout	Resource list Flipchart headed up – ‘Sharing: favourite resources’
10m (Total 4h 20m)	TN 13. Summary and review of the day Revisit session objectives. Ask participants to write on sticky notes one thing they will take from today and apply in their own teaching. Put sticky notes on wall and look at each other’s comments. Complete evaluation forms.	PPT 20-24 Sticky notes		Flip chart headed up ‘Summary of day and next steps’ Evaluation form

Trainer notes

These notes are to support trainers to facilitate the different activities in the module. **They are not meant to be prescriptive, and trainers can adapt the activities as needed to suit the participants.** Some activities can be omitted, and others extended, according to the group.

Suggestions for **alternatives**, or for **differentiation** strategies (according to the background and experiences of participants) are given in boxes in the notes for each activity.

PowerPoint slides, resources and handouts can be adapted or omitted as needed.

The total running time for the session as it stands is 4 hours 20 minutes. However the sessions could be extended or shortened or activities removed, depending on the audience need (and prior knowledge). This allows the session to be run as a half day or full day session with breaks. A range of extension activities and alternatives have been given to support this flexibility.

TN 1

Trainer notes

Time	Content	Resources		
		No.	Style	Title
20m	<p>TN 1 Introductions and starter activity: Design the perfect learner</p> <p>In groups at tables participants discuss and note (creatively) the skills and attributes of a perfect learner.</p> <p>After 10 minutes have the tables share their findings.</p>	<p>PPT 1-2</p> <p>Flipchart paper and pens</p> <p>HO 1</p>	<p>Discussion on tables</p> <p>Round up of discussion on flip chart</p> <p>Handout</p>	<p>Design the perfect learner</p>
(Total 20m)	<p>The trainer should note some of the recurring factors highlighted by the groups.</p>			

Use **PPT 1** at the beginning of the session to introduce yourself. Participants have an opportunity to introduce themselves in the next section.

The purpose of the activity is to get the participants sharing and talking. Most importantly the purpose is to encourage positive thinking and a willingness to share ideas – encouraging all participants to contribute knowing that any contribution will be welcomed. This is a good opportunity for the trainer to begin to assess the level of experience and expertise within the group and whether table groupings may need to be changed to ensure an appropriate mix.

PPT 2: it is important that participants are open-minded about initial assessment; therefore it is key that the trainer ensures that all ideas are well received and applauded. Many of the participants may have been using the same initial assessment tools for some time; they may also prioritise the awarding organisation summative assessments as the issue rather than initial assessment.

What other images would the participants add to this slide?

Alternatives

If preferred or if participants are still arriving, the trainer may wish to do the introductions, aims and objectives first (TN 2), before this activity.

The trainer could also provide magazines for participants to cut up and do a collage rather than a drawing, list, spider diagram, etc.

The trainer may choose to put the instructions for the activity on **PPT 2** rather than use **HO 1**.

Another activity: consider using a functional skills problem-solving activity to get participants thinking functionally.

Ensure that all tables have pens and paper.

In groups on tables – ask participants to move to other tables if groups are too small or large.

Ask the participants to ‘design’ their perfect learner – what skills and attributes does a learner need to be successful? They may wish to draw the learner, list the attributes, do a spider diagram, etc. Encourage them to be creative in their thinking.

They have 10 minutes to design the perfect learner. They should note (in whatever form they choose) all the aspects of this individual on the flip chart paper provided.

Note to trainer

At this point you are hoping that participants will highlight **some of the factors needed to be successful with functional skills**. The trainer should note some of the recurring factors highlighted by the groups. These are not only the technical skills of English, maths and ICT. When you are drawing out the key factors shared by the participants note some of them for later reference. Note them on a flip chart and place it on the wall near the participants’ flipcharts. Examples might include:

- Factors relating to the interrelatedness of the three functional skills
- Problem-solving skills
- **Maturity – attitudes, emotions, confidence** – turning up on time, being motivated
- **Communication skills** – listening skills, getting on well with their peers, being polite or having good manners
- **Concentration** – can see a job through to the end
- **Group / team work and interpersonal skills** – willingness to be involved in collaborative activities
- **Transferability** – ability to use skills from one activity in another.

Ask the following questions of your participants (don’t spend long on this, you are simply planting the seed of a thought):

- Do you use an initial and / or diagnostic tool?
- If so, does the tool or tools you use now discover if the learners have the skills and attributes you've listed in this activity?

Alternative

The trainer may choose to put these questions up as a PowerPoint slide.

Ask participants to display their flipcharts on the walls. The trainer should add his / her flipchart to the display and / or highlight any key points that haven't arisen.

TN 2

Trainer notes

Time	Content	Resources		
		No.	Style	Title
10m	TN 2. Aims and outcomes Outline aim and outcomes for the day.	PPT 3-4	Presentation	Aims and outcomes
(30m)	Introduce the reflection sheet HO 2.	HO 2	Handout	Reflection log

The purpose of the activity is to ensure that participants understand the aim and outcomes of this session, to explore briefly other issues of importance to participants, and to indicate briefly the other CPD sessions available. In addition the Reflection sheet is introduced.

Aim

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Outcomes

By the end of the session participants will have:

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

Talk through the aim and expected outcomes. Ask participants if these meet their expectations. If participants have other issues they would like to discuss, 'park' / record these on a flipchart by asking participants to note them on sticky notes and give them to the trainer. If the issues are outside the remit of this training then refer the participant to other functional skills training modules (see Appendix 4). If it is

something that can be answered quickly, then this could be done at an appropriate point during the session. It is important to acknowledge these questions or participants will not fully engage with the training. The trainer may choose to have a flip chart specifically for questions – if so refer to this at this point.

Introduce the reflection sheet **HO 2**. Tell participants that at the end of each section of the training they will be given a few minutes to reflect on what they have just discussed and note any issues and actions they need to take when they return to their centre. For example they are now going to introduce themselves to the rest of the group and there may be people they wish to keep in contact with following the training.

TN 3

Trainer notes

Time	Content	Resources		
		No.	Style	Title
20m	<p>TN 3. Introductions</p> <p>Ask participants to introduce themselves and share what specific expertise they have in initial and diagnostic assessment of learners. Ask them to note this on HO 3.</p> <p>Find out about the audience.</p>	<p>PPT 5</p> <p>HO 3</p> <p>Appendix 1: overview of initial and diagnostic assessment</p>	<p>Handout Discussion</p> <p>5-page overview</p>	<p>Introduction</p> <p>Your table handout – one per table</p> <p>Identifying a learner's starting point</p>
(Total 50m)				

The purpose of the activity is to explore understanding of and expertise in initial and diagnostic assessment. This is a good opportunity to establish a shared vocabulary.

In table groups, ask participants to introduce themselves, their work contexts, what they would like to gain from the day and whether they have experience of initial assessment – whether related to literacy, language and numeracy (English, maths and ESOL), key skills (KS), functional skills (FS) or a combination of these. Participants should use **HO 3** (suggest one handout per table – each table can then decide who should act as scribe) to note this.

Use this activity to explore the level of expertise in initial and diagnostic assessment you have in the room by taking soundings from each table. It is very important the trainer does this – it may be that there are participants who don't know anything about functional skills and they will need extra support with the activities. You may also discover that some participants' understanding of the different purposes of initial and diagnostic assessment is shaky and that practice does not follow national guidelines.

Find out who has used the regulatory criteria (and which version they are using). At this point hold up the criteria (all 5 documents) to ensure that all participants are clear about the documents being referred to (their location is noted in the signposting handout). Note that many centres are using out of date versions of the criteria.

Differentiation

If the trainer becomes aware that some participants are new to functional skills then it would be useful to have a supply of the regulatory criteria for viewing. Copies of the following documents would also be useful for these participants:

- Teaching and learning functional English
- Teaching and learning functional maths
- Teaching and learning functional ICT

The location of these online resources is listed in the resource handout.

Conversely there may be a great deal of expertise in the room – it will be useful to capture this expertise and use it in each of the sessions. At this point the trainer may find it useful to move participants to different tables in order to share the expertise around.

Terminology

It is crucial to recognise that different audiences use different vocabulary and that different organisations and individuals within them may use terms slightly differently. It may be useful to spend a little time establishing a shared vocabulary. Explain terms where necessary.

The ‘initial assessment’ referred to in **HO 3** is as defined by the QCDA:

“Initial assessment helps 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.

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 able to assess the learner's level of functionality.

Note to trainer

This may need careful handling as there are confident and competent practitioners who do not hold such qualifications. It should also be noted that there is no requirement for specific qualifications to teach functional skills – however inspectors and funders may expect level 5 competence. Reference to the NRDC research (You wouldn't expect a maths teacher to teach plastering....) may be useful to highlight the benefits of qualified staffing of functional skills.

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.”

In this module, the terms functional English, functional maths and functional ICT are used rather than 'numeracy', 'application of number' and 'maths' or 'communication', 'literacy' and 'English', 'ICT' or 'Skills for Life'. Delegates may use the terms interchangeably – this should be handled sensitively by the trainer but it should always be made clear that for example, functional English is not the same as Key Skills Communication, adult literacy or indeed GCSE English (however the latter does include some functionality).

Differentiation

It is expected that participants will have some experience of initial and diagnostic assessment. However, if there are participants who are new to initial and diagnostic assessment they might benefit from reading **Appendix 1**.

Some delegates may find a handout stating the definitions above useful.

Alternatives

The trainer should note that if changes are made to the session then the reflection sheet will need to be amended accordingly. The reflection log may be introduced at the end of aims and outcomes or here after the introductions.

TN 4

Trainer notes

Time	Content	Resources		
		No.	Style	Title
25m (Total 1h 15m)	TN 4. Purpose of initial assessment and diagnostic assessment Discussion of the purpose of initial assessment and diagnostic assessment.	PPT 6-8 HO 4	Discussion Snowballing activity Handout	 Purpose of initial and diagnostic assessment

The purpose of the activity is to begin to explore the purpose of initial and diagnostic assessment for functional skills.

PPT 6

Ask participants to discuss on their tables and come up with a list of purposes of initial and diagnostic assessment for functional skills – ask them to distinguish between initial assessment and diagnostic assessment. Use **HO 4** to note their discussion. Ask them also to consider what the value of initial assessment is.

Note to trainer: It is important to confirm the difference between initial and diagnostic assessment as the terms are often used interchangeably in different organisations. See TN 3 trainer notes for more detail. For the purpose of this training:

- Initial assessment – gives an overall idea of level, e.g. ‘working towards Level 1’.
- Diagnostic assessment – looks at specific skills within the level and may also highlight the need for a more specialised assessment, e.g. for dyslexia.
- Some assessment systems combine initial and diagnostic assessment.
- Both levels of assessment (initial and diagnostic) tend to focus on technical skills rather than the problem-solving skills required to be functional. 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.

Participants should note one purpose per box in **HO 4** (this will be used in the next session as a card activity).

Ask the participants to share across the tables – snowball and come up with a comprehensive list. Examples might include:

- Getting learners on the correct course, at the correct level
- Addressing gaps in learner’s knowledge and skills
- Planning learner support and achievement
- Checking ongoing progress and readiness for taking summative assessments
- Can’t plan learning without a baseline
- To measure distance travelled
- A baseline to personalise learning.

The setting of SMART targets is covered in detail in Module 10 (Target setting for functional skills). These targets should be informed by the findings of initial and diagnostic assessment and are then noted in the ILP.

Sum up with **PPT 7** and **PPT 8**.

Ensure that participants understand terms relating to assessment. If necessary use an example of a screening tool to display, as delegates may actually be using such tools believing them to be initial or diagnostic assessment tools.

Differentiation

If you have a very experienced group or only a few participants they may finish this activity very quickly. You could then ask them to share stories as to the impact of initial assessment on learners they have known (or perhaps the impact on themselves).

If you have very little time you could omit this activity and replace it with a whole group discussion, working through the PowerPoint slides.

Refer participants to their reflection log **HO 2**.

TN 5

Trainer notes

Time	Content	Resources		
		No.	Style	Title
20m (1h 45m)	<p>TN 5. The learner journey – initial assessment and diagnostic assessment links to the programme of study</p> <p>A quick activity to remind participants that initial assessment isn't just a one-off activity – but occurs throughout a learner's journey</p>	<p>PPT 9</p> <p>HO 4 used in last activity – now completed</p> <p>Scissors</p>	<p>Slide</p> <p>Handout</p>	<p>A diagram of the learner journey may be put in the pack by the trainer if it is felt to be appropriate</p> <p>Flipchart paper and pens</p>

Purpose of this activity: an activity to remind participants that assessment isn't just a one-off activity, but occurs throughout a learning journey. This also links to Activity 10 looking at communication and who needs to be involved in the process. A diagram of the learner journey can be found on this link:

<http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/node/1152>

Alternative 1

The trainer may choose to omit this activity and simply talk through the learner journey **PPT 9**. The trainer could ask questions at each stage, e.g. 'Why is initial assessment important for this stage in the learner journey?'

Alternative 2

This activity could be used earlier in the session for less experienced groups.

Ask participants to look at the list of purposes of assessment they developed in the last activity. Ask them to cut them up into cards (tear them neatly if you have no scissors).

Alternative

Print out **PPT 9** onto A4 or A3 paper so that participants can place their cards physically onto the stages in the journey.

The learner journey – the journey to external assessment

Then ask participants to draw the learner's journey, of a learner from within their organisation, on flipchart paper. Ask participants to put their cards in the order of the learner's journey. This has the advantage of being specific to their setting.

Participants may include:

- Information, advice and guidance (IAG) – is the learner on the right programme of study?
- Initial and diagnostic assessment – what does the learner need to learn?
- Teaching and learning – planning for learning, where and when will this take place?
- Ongoing formative assessment.
- Planning when to enter a learner for summative assessment.

Ask participants to consider how the initial assessment process can be used to support each step of the learner's journey. Take feedback from each table – highlighting the **value** of initial assessment. Use PPT 9 to sum up.

Refer participants to their reflection log **HO 2**.

TN 6

Trainer notes

Time	Content	Resources		
		No.	Style	Title
30m	TN 6. How initial assessment and diagnostic assessment are different in functional skills than in Skills for Life / key skills	PPT 10-11	Slides	Definition of functional skills / level of demand
	Looking at the differences: Clarify what we are talking about – PPT 10	HO 5	Handout	What makes functional skills different?
(Total 2h 05m)	Factors affecting level of demand: PPT 11	Appendix 2: sample test papers	Handout	Assessments
	Discussing assessment			Whiteboard if online awarding organisation assessments are to be viewed
	Pull out the key differences and implications for initial assessment			

Purpose of activity: here we aim to discuss why functional skills are different from literacy, language and numeracy and key skills, and prepare to plan a 'new' initial and diagnostic assessment model for their organisations.

Looking at the differences

PPT 10 is a reminder of the definition of functional skills.

This might be a suitable point for a break – if so this can be left for participants to consider during the break.

Discussing the differences

Introduce **PPT 11** – these are the four differentiating factors taken from the regulatory criteria. Remind participants that the regulatory criteria are not like the key skills standards and guidance – their purpose is the development of assessments by the awarding organisations.

Alternative

Ask participants which of these factors do their learners find most difficult. The vast majority of responses in the past have been 'independence'. The question then to ask participants is how to conduct an initial assessment for independence (many IA tools concentrate on technical demand).

The trainer should outline what each factor refers to and give an example, e.g. tasks at Entry 1 are based on a high level of learner familiarity with the situation.

Complexity – real life situations, as they arise, are often quite complex. Identifying the various components within a situation, the steps to solve a problem or complete a task, and the accessibility of the activity itself, all contribute to the level of complexity.

Familiarity – this reflects the extent to which a learner recognises elements of a problem or situation, utilising skills and understanding developed in other contexts, and relating this experience to make sense of a situation. In transferring or applying skills and understanding, the individual may need to adapt and reorganise their established approach in order to tackle the situation effectively.

Technical demand –this reflects the range of knowledge, skills and techniques that an individual is required to draw upon in order to tackle a particular situation. Functional skills require that a learner does not only have the technical skill but also know when to choose to use that skill.

Independence – this relates to the level of autonomy that learners demonstrate when tackling a problem or completing an activity. A learner's problem-solving skills are a key element of their independence, allowing them to make confident decisions and demonstrate their skills without requiring the full support of others.

Then encourage discussion of the key differences and implications for initial and diagnostic assessment.

Alternative or extension activity

Instead of this activity you could give the participants pairs of questions from test papers. Each pair of questions should be made up of one from an adult literacy or numeracy Level 1 test paper and one from a functional skills test paper. Ask participants what different skills a learner would need to be able to answer the questions.

See **Appendix 2** for sample questions or the trainer could choose to use copies of full test papers. As an alternative, the trainer can use sample assessment questions as shown on awarding organisation websites – a whiteboard would be needed for this. If internet access is available then different awarding organisation papers can be viewed live online. This would allow the trainer to choose a level most appropriate for the audience.

Ask participants to consider what determines the 'level' of a functional skills question in comparison with a literacy, numeracy or key skills question.

Participants may include a comments about:

- The level of reading for understanding, of questions in summative assessments;
- The emphasis on writing has changed; and
- Speaking and listening are included in functional skills.

These comments are welcome – what skills do learners need to be able to read and understand the questions? These skills need to be assessed as part of the initial assessment.

Other activities could be removed and both this and the alternative could be used – if this is the major focus of the session. Although this is included as an extension activity it could be used as an introduction to this section.

Note to trainer – some participants may be critical of the current assessment regimes, however this is what we are working with at the moment. The focus needs to be on how we can best support learners in the current situation.

Note to trainer

The November 2009 (Ofqual/09/4558) version of the functional skills criteria had special reference to equality, access and inclusion. This section (paragraphs 26 to 31) has now been removed. Trainers and participants must now refer to **General Conditions of Recognition** (May 2011) under sections; D2, G2.2, G3 and G6 for this information.

Another useful resource is Skills In-Sight, a project which will develop an accessible toolkit for English and maths skills to be used in education or work-based learning environments. The project will be delivered by Action for Blind People for 18 months, with funding from Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS):
<http://www.actionforblindpeople.org.uk/our-services/projects/skills-in-sight-project/>

The trainer should also note that Module 17 in this series discusses the initial assessment of learners who may be dyslexic.

Other audiences

'*Making Prisons Work: Skills for Rehabilitation*', Ministry of Justice, May 2011 and the implications for assessment in the next round of OLASS. This may be a useful resource if the audience includes participants from the secure estate. Available at:
<http://www.bis.gov.uk/assets/biscore/further-education-skills/docs/m/11-828-making-prisons-work-skills-for-rehabilitation>

Note to trainer

Differences – the basics

If you choose not to cover the issue of summative assessment in any detail (this will depend on what you are told about your audience) participants completely new to functional skills may not be aware of the differences in the assessment tools. Some notes to point out are:

- Functional skills are available at Entry 1, Entry 2, Entry 3, Level 1 and Level 2.
- Speaking, listening and communication are now part of the assessment process.
- Writing is more clearly assessed in the test.
- The assessment is made up of task-based activities rather than multiple choice options.
- Level 1 and Level 2 tests are externally set and marked. Entry levels are externally set, and internally marked.
- There is no portfolio for functional skills.
- There are no proxies for functional skills.

These could be used as a handout if required or added to **HO 5**.

Distribute **HO 5** and ask participants to highlight any issues they need to consider. From their discussions they may add further points – share these as appropriate.

Refer participants to their reflection log **HO 2**.

TN 7

Trainer notes

Time	Content	Resources		
		No.	Style	Title
30m	<p>TN 7. What does good practice in initial assessment and diagnostic assessment of functional skills look like? Models available.</p> <p>Ask the tables to quickly note all the initial assessment and diagnostic assessment models they are aware of – use HO 6a. Draw up a full list from the front – note these on a flip chart. HO 6b has some examples of tools. HO 6c is an example of diagnostic assessment record sheet.</p> <p>PowerPoint presentation to summarise.</p> <p>Work through HO 7 to gather information about each tool (note that this handout will be referred to in a later activity).</p>	PPT 12-13	Slides	
		HO 6a HO 6b	Handout	Initial assessment tools (HO 6a blank, HO 6b including some available tools)
		HO 6c	Handout	Example diagnostic assessment summary
		HO 7	Handout	Methods of IA
		Appendix 3	Handout	Case studies
(Total 2h 35m)	PPT 12-13 – a discussion of the factors needed for a positive experience of initial and diagnostic assessment and the importance of having high expectations of learners.		Flipchart	

(Optional) Review what we have done so far:

- We have got to know each other a little.
- We have shared the purpose of initial and diagnostic assessment.
- We have linked the initial and diagnostic assessment process to the learner journey and have agreed (hopefully) that this isn't a one-off activity.

Purpose of this activity: to find out what tools the participants are using now and what tools are available.

PPT 12

Ask each group to note down quickly all the initial and diagnostic assessment models and tools they know about. Encourage participants to share their existing practice, including any centre-designed procedures. Try to draw out any examples of particularly innovative approaches to initial assessment and encourage participants who are interested in finding out more to follow this up after the session.

Alternative 1

Trainers may choose to share sample printouts from the different initial assessment tools – if this is appropriate and if they have the necessary permissions. This would also help with the distinction between initial and diagnostic assessment.

Alternative 2

HO 6c can be used to discuss diagnostic assessment – or can be used with TN 4 to clarify the differences between initial and diagnostic assessment.

Draw up a full list from the front – note these on a flip chart. Many centres concentrate on computer-based assessment (sometimes paper-based in work-based learning) and do not consider using any further assessment to support this (e.g. to assess functionality).

Alternative

HO 6b lists a number of initial and diagnostic assessment tools which can be purchased, or are available free of charge. In some settings this may not be appropriate and the trainer has the option to choose appropriate tools. Hence **HO 6a** is a blank version of the handout.

Differentiation/alternative

Participants with no or very little experience of initial assessment may need an explanation of the computer-based tools available. A suggestion is to ask participants with experience of these to give a one-minute explanation of the tool they use, i.e. just the key features. This could be used as a starter activity.

Ask participant to add to **HO 6 (a or b)** any tools they use.

Distribute **HO 7**. How many of these assessment methods do they use with their learners (compare **HO 6a/b** with **HO 7**)? Ask participants to discuss the different models and tools:

- What are their advantages and disadvantages?

- What has been their experience of using them?
- Are there other methods that they would add?

Participants should use the second page of **HO 7** to make these notes. Make the point that a range of methodologies will achieve a more holistic – and accurate – assessment.

Extension

HO 6c is a generic representation of information from a diagnostic assessment tool. It can be used to discuss the distinction between initial and diagnostic assessment. It can also be used to dig into the purpose of diagnostic assessment and whether it provides the information needed about a learner's functional skills – linking to the discussions in TN 6.

The nationally-developed diagnostic assessment

<http://rwp.excellencegateway.org.uk/Diagnostic%20Assessment/> includes a statement as to who should be undertaking diagnostic assessment:

“Diagnostic assessment helps to identify specific learning strengths and needs, and usually follows an initial assessment at the beginning of a learning programme, where there is an indication of the need for further, more detailed assessment. It is related to specific skills needed for tasks. The diagnostic information can be included in the learner's ILP. It is **recommended that diagnostic assessment is conducted by specialist teachers of literacy, language or numeracy.**”

This could then lead into a discussion on who should deliver initial assessment / diagnostic assessment and what training needs there might be

It would also be useful to refer to Skills Funding Agency Adult Skills Budget funding requirements 2011-12 which gives in section 6 definitions of the Skills Checks, Initial and Diagnostic Assessment with guidance on who can deliver these.

[http://readingroom.lsc.gov.uk/SFA/Adult_Skills_Budget_funding_requirements_2011_12 - July 2011.pdf](http://readingroom.lsc.gov.uk/SFA/Adult_Skills_Budget_funding_requirements_2011_12_-_July_2011.pdf).

Refer participants to page 2 of **HO 7**. Refer back to the differences between functional skills and key skills – ask participants to go through each tool and note whether it would be a suitable tool to assess whether a learner can deal with complex, unfamiliar situations independently. Each tool can be used in various ways to include independence or not – so participants should consider the approach used as well as the tool itself.

PPT 13

More detail on each of methods outlined in **HO 7** can be found in the Initial Assessment Toolkit for Key Skills and Skills for Life

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

Although developed for the Key Skills Support Programme (KSSP) in 2006, much of this advice remains valid and useful for functional skills.

Documents (appraisal of written information, e.g. application forms, records of achievement, references, certificates). Some learners' educational qualifications and achievements may not reflect their true ability or potential. Failure to achieve educational qualifications could be caused by a variety of reasons. The learners may have dropped out of school early. They may have missed large parts of their schooling due to illness or disability. There may be other reasons. Academic qualifications are not necessarily an indicator of success in vocational learning programmes. A learner's ability and potential needs to be initially assessed so that accurate decisions can be made about the type of programme and level from which they would most benefit. Learners may have the skills but not have completed qualifications.

Self-assessment (and / or learner questionnaires). The individual's own views should be taken seriously. They are an important dimension in the overall picture and can put into perspective information from other sources. Self-assessment supports the move towards independence and in coping with increased flexibility as the learner moves through the levels. Self-assessment does require a level of maturity – but it can also be argued that self-assessment can support the development of maturity. The LSIS self-assessment card sort activity can be shown as an example (see list for of resources for further details) and can be supplemented by the *Self-assessment record sheet* (an Excel file where learners can record and evidence their skills – see the file on the right-hand menu of the Being Functional site: http://tlp.excellencegateway.org.uk/tlp/fs/fs-resources/cpd_act_1.php).

Discussions provide an ideal situation for trainer and learner to get to know each other. Ask participants if the staff who are to teach learners do the initial admission interview. In many centres this is not the case and valuable information can be lost.

Assessment tools can highlight where there are particular issues across a cohort. This can help with scheme of work planning. Other initial and diagnostic assessment tools can be found on the Excellence Gateway:

- <http://archive.excellencegateway.org.uk/page.aspx?o=toolslibrary> for initial assessment
- <http://rwp.excellencegateway.org.uk/Diagnostic%20Assessment> for diagnostic assessment materials. Note that these include assessments of free writing, spelling error analysis, miscue reading assessment, numeracy error analysis, handwriting.

Many trainers will have hard copies which would be a useful resource for the carousel. Not all participants may have seen or used these materials.

Structured activities – for functional skills it is relevant to create situations or tasks that have been designed specifically to give valid and reliable samples of the individual's performance. Most commonly used are past test papers but structured activities can be more sophisticated than this. Some centres link a task to a vocational or apprenticeship area, however this would not assess a learner's ability

to deal with a range of contexts. Free writing is also a useful activity. The trainer may choose to refer delegates to (links are elsewhere in the trainer pack):

- The key skills initial assessment toolkit
- The Skills for Life diagnostic assessment materials
- The Bromley case study (see **Appendix 3**).

Extension task

The trainer may choose to add in an activity looking at how to design tasks for free writing. Free writing can be linked to theories of situated literacies and the embedding of learning.

Observation of group or individual activities. This may be during induction or prior to this.

Other methods which delegates might raise include the following, though you will need to assess whether the first in particular is over-complex for the audience. The trainer will need to gauge how much theory the participants will be interested in discussing. The session isn't about theory but about practical strategies.

- **Divergent assessment** – an idea linked to Bloom's Taxonomy and the idea of 'mastery'. Many practitioners who were involved in the functional skills pilot will be familiar with the idea of mastery –this was amended to 'secure'. Divergent assessment focuses on what a learner can do (which might be wider than the limits of the functional skills criteria). Example: a tutor may use open questions, give qualitative feedback and expect their learners to explain their thinking or conclusions. The other methods described above are likely to be convergent methods (i.e. aim to find predetermined knowledge, understanding and skills) – assessment of the learner by the tutor. To clarify: Convergent assessments are those which have one correct answer that the student is trying to reach. Divergent assessments appreciate a range of answers based on informed opinion and analysis.
- **Peer review** – research has shown that learners at all levels can provide valid and accurate reviews of each other's work, providing they are given a structure to work to and are well supported by their teacher. Effective peer review helps learners to become familiar with success criteria and gain skills in assessing their own progress. Teachers can tap into the information generated by peer review to help plan future learning.

Ask for feedback for each of the methods (advantages, disadvantages and other comments – to build a picture of their usefulness) and add detail to the second page of **HO 7**. Note that **HO 7** will be referred to in a later activity. The trainer should encourage the participants to be discriminating about these methods and tools – what are their advantages and disadvantages (what are their limitations)?

We are still developing our idea of what good practice looks like but there are some case studies and we can learn from and build on the good practice shown in Skills for Life and key skills delivery.

We are building upon our understanding of the differences between key skills, Skills for Life (English, maths and ESOL) and functional skills. Anecdotally we do know that some centres are being successful with functional skills – what are they doing right? They are using a combination of tools to suit their learners and the programmes they are on.

There are a number of case studies which could be used here if the trainer feels it is appropriate. These can be found in the LSIS Functional Skills for Adults Action Research Project Case Studies. Depending on audience a range of these case studies could be used. See **Appendix 3**. Other examples are also given which are referenced in Appendix 3.

The case studies can be found in an LSIS workroom:

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

Log in >

Talk and share >

Workrooms directory >

Initial Assessment of Functional Skills

Extension activity

PPT 14 and 15

This section can be concluded with a discussion around ‘Factors for a positive experience of initial and diagnostic assessment’ (**PPT 14**) and the importance of having high expectations of learners (**PPT 15**).

The issue of high expectations is discussed within Department of *Education Written Ministerial Statement on the National Curriculum Review*, 19 December 2011

Available at: <http://www.education.gov.uk/inthenews/inthenews/a00201092/written-ministerial-statement-on-the-national-curriculum-review>

Some other countries appear to expect much more of their learners – this is going to be an ongoing discussion and is likely to inform government thinking.

Refer participants to their reflection log **HO 2**.

TN 8

Trainer notes

Time	Content	Resources		
		No.	Style	Title
30 min	TN 8. Developing an initial and diagnostic assessment model Putting together tools to make a coherent package of initial and diagnostic assessment for their learners.	HO 8	Handout	What do the criteria tell us we need to initial assessment?
(Total 3h 05m)		Appendix 4:	Handout	Carousel activity of assessment resources Self-assessment sort cards – instructions

Purpose of the activity: to allow participants to explore existing assessment tools and to ‘design’ an assessment that will meet the needs to their learners and of functional skills requirements.

Distribute **HO 8**. Talk through **HO 8** which lists the factors outlined in the criteria. Ask participants to consider how they can tackle the initial assessment of functional skills within their organisation. Have a table of materials available to be used as a carousel activity for participants to browse to find ideas they could use – to put together a model which would work for their learners.

Resource suggestions for the carousel activity

Examples of functional skills assessments and Skills for Life assessments, as in HO 6b plus...

Being functional, Functional skills self-assessment cards, LSIS

Available at: <http://tlp.excellencegateway.org.uk/tlp/fs/fs-resources/assets/CPD/Functional%20skills%20self-assessment%20cards.pdf> There is also a short version of the cards which could be produced for each group.

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

Teaching and learning problem solving, KSSP, 2005

Available at:

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

Level Crossing activities, KSSP, 2006

Available at: <http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/page.aspx?o=195646> Some trainers may have the original hard copies of these materials. If not they are available online and a selection could be used.

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

Available at:

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

Copies of the current functional skills criteria (all 5 documents as used previously).

You may want to add other tools / processes.

Further information for the trainer

The Being Functional sort cards can be used in various ways – see **Appendix 4**.

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

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

Give the participants time to put together their models and ask them to share first with the rest of their group and then with the rest of the participants. If participants would prefer to work in pairs or small groups that would be fine too. Encourage participants to be 'critical friends' to each other. It may be useful for them to consider a specific cohort of learners as the initial assessment model might vary from cohort to cohort.

An example model might be:

- Use an online tool (perhaps their awarding organisation's) to ascertain the initial level of technical competence in English and maths (and ICT if appropriate).
- Once a learner's level of technical ability has been established, the practitioner checks whether the learner has all the skills at that level in terms of complexity, familiarity and independence by:
 - observing learners' ability to work independently during activities within induction (NB this would require initial assessment to be a team effort of staff across programmes of study – more of that in TN 9); or

- using the *Being Functional* problem solving self-assessment cards.

Delegates must remember that manageability and pragmatism are key – it is unlikely that they will be in a position to totally redesign their initial assessment process.

Extension activity

The *Being Functional – functional skills progression cards* could be used to discuss further assessment for learning.

<http://tlp.excellencegateway.org.uk/tlp/fs/fs-resources/assets/CPD1/Functional%20skills%20progression%20cards.pdf>

Refer participants to their reflection log **HO 2**.

TN 9

Trainer notes

Time	Content	Resources		
		No.	Style	Title
15m (Total 3h 20m)	TN 9. Let's not forget the learner – spiky profiles and self-assessment Quick discussion about individual learners needs.	PPT 16-17	Slides	Spiky profiles

Purpose of the activity: to remind participants that simply knowing a learner's level via an initial assessment tool is only half the story. We need to dig into the level to find out if there are gaps in the learner's understanding and skills. In other words a learner's skills may be 'spiky' within a level. This activity is to ensure that all issues around diagnostic assessment are covered. This is especially important when target setting with learners.

Spiky profiles

We have looked at a range of initial assessment tools. When we investigate a learner's technical skills through tools we must investigate where their strengths lie and where they need further support. A strong focus on initial and ongoing assessment and differentiation of learning can help address the diverse needs of learners with spiky profiles.

PPT 16: all learners have a spiky profile, with 'narrow' spikes. For example, it's not just that someone is good at number but finds handling data hard, they might be confident in mental methods and less sure about written ones, or have excellent estimation skills but struggle to measure accurately, or calculate easily with money but find abstract concepts difficult, or have a good memory for step-by-step procedures but sometimes miss the bigger picture. Progress in learning is therefore a very individual process.

The trainer may choose to remind the participants that learners can take the three components of Functional English at different levels. However it should be added that participants should refer to their awarding organisation to check how they approach this.

PPT 17: ask participants to consider spiky profiles and amend their **HO 8**.

Remind participants of other CPD sessions, e.g. Module 10: Target setting for functional skills.

Differentiation

The trainer may feel this is an unnecessary area to cover with more experienced practitioners.

Alternative

This section could be run earlier so that the issues relating to spiky profiles can be discussed when diagnostic assessment is discussed in TN 4: Purpose of initial and diagnostic assessment.

Refer participants to their reflection log **HO 2**.

TN 10

Trainer notes

Time	Content	Resources		
		No.	Style	Title
15m	<p>TN 10. Communicating initial assessment and diagnostic assessment information to all areas of a learner's programme – links to the ILP</p> <p>Consideration of who needs to be actively involved in the initial assessment process. Participants need to be aware that they must have the buy-in of the learner for initial assessment to be effective.</p>	PPT 18-19	Slides	Communication and giving feedback
(Total 3h 35m)	<p>This should also include a reference to communicating with the learner.</p>	HO 9	Handout	Communication - jigsaw activity

The purpose of this activity is to consider who needs to be involved in the initial and diagnostic assessment process. This is an ideal opportunity to link to other modules in the series for example, Module 10: Target setting for functional skills – who works on target setting with the learners and are they aware / involved in the initial assessment process?

In TN 8 we looked at putting an initial assessment model for functional skills together. Ask delegates to note in the right-hand column of **HO 8** who would be responsible for that element of the initial or diagnostic assessment (if they haven't already done so).

Alternative / extension

The jigsaw could be enlarged and cut up for a more kinaesthetic activity.

Activity alternative – drawing a flowchart of the process which shares the information gleaned from initial assessment and how two-way communication is supported (this may be through a shared individual learning plan or tracking system).

Using **HO 9**, ask participants to write in each piece of the jigsaw who should be involved in the initial assessment process. Then discuss in groups:

- How does your jigsaw compare with those of others in your group?
- Where do the pieces interface and how will the communication be managed?
- Have they included a piece which represents the learner, as the learner should be at the centre of the process?
- Are functional skills part of the learners' wider (programme-wide) individual learning plan?

Then ask them to make further notes on **HO 8** if necessary.

Use **PPT 18** to share participant's ideas – has anyone been forgotten?

Extension

If appropriate the trainer may wish to discuss feedback on initial assessment.

PPT 19. Participants need to be aware that they must have the buy-in of the learner for initial assessment to be effective. This includes giving effective feedback. If appropriate, further support on giving effective feedback is widely available. One useful resource is *Inclusive learning approaches for literacy, language, numeracy and ICT*, LLUK, 2007

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

Refer participants to their reflection log **HO 2**.

TN 11

Trainer notes

Time	Content	Resources		
		No.	Style	Title
30m (Total 4h 05m)	TN 11. Top tips for initial assessment and diagnostic assessment of functional skills Ask participants to look back at their reflection sheets and the activities carried out. Ask them to put together a list of 5 top tips or action points. Share these top tips around the room, then give out HO 10 and ask them to add any new ones to the list. Share these across the groups to develop a comprehensive top tips list for participants to take away.	HO 10	Resource	Top tips sheet

The purpose of this activity is to check through the models that the participants have developed by using a 'top tips' proforma. This activity takes initial assessment into the broader planning within an organisation – moving them towards a whole organisation approach.

Ask participants to look back at their reflection sheets (**HO 2**) and the activities carried out. Ask them to put together a list of 5 top tips or action points.

Share these top tips around the room and then give out **HO 10** and ask them to add any new ones to the list. Develop a comprehensive top tips list for participants to take away.

Refer participants to their reflection log **HO 2**.

TN 12

Trainer notes

Time	Content	Resources		
		No.	Style	Title
10m	TN 12. Signposting to other resources	HO 11	Handout	Resource list
<i>(Total 4h 10m)</i>	Indicate where each of the documents used came from, plus other relevant websites too.	Sticky notes		Flipchart headed up – 'Sharing: favourite resources'

Purpose of activity: to ensure all participants know where to find resources and to ask them to identify further resources.

There is a range of materials which look at initial and diagnostic assessment from the point of view of key skills or Skills for Life. These are an excellent start to the journey to the initial and diagnostic assessment of functional skills. A list is given in **HO 11**.

Ask participants to share with their tables any other resources they have found useful. Note these on sticky notes and add them to the flip chart on the wall.

Refer participants to their reflection log **HO 2**.

TN 13

Trainer notes

Time	Content	Resources		
		No.	Style	Title
10m (Total 4h 20m)	TN 13. Summary and review of the day Revisit session objectives. Ask participants to write on sticky notes one thing they will take from today and apply in their own teaching. Put sticky notes on wall and look at each other's comments. Complete centre evaluation forms, if used.	PPT 20-24 Sticky notes		Flip chart headed up 'Summary of day and next steps' Evaluation form

The purpose of this activity is to give participants the opportunity to complete their reflection log and to encourage them to prioritise or plan actions they will take in their centre.

Revisit session objectives **PPT 20-21**.

Next steps – **PPT 22**. Ask participants to write on sticky notes one thing they will take from today and apply in their own (and perhaps other's) practice. Stick on wall and look at each other's sticky notes.

Complete evaluation forms (if used).

Extension activity

Show a list of the LSIS training modules as an alternative final activity linked to planning their own CPD.

Refer participants to their reflection log **HO 2**.

Module 8

Improving initial and diagnostic assessment for functional skills

Handouts

- HO 1: Design the perfect learner**
- HO 2: Reflection log**
- HO 3: Your table**
- HO 4: Purpose of initial and diagnostic assessment**
- HO 5: What makes functional skills different?**
- HO 6a: Initial and diagnostic assessment tools – blank**
- HO 6b: Initial and diagnostic assessment tools**
- HO 6c: Example diagnostic assessment summary**
- HO 7: Methods of initial assessment**
- HO 8: What do the regulatory criteria tell us about initial assessment?**
- HO 9: Communication**
- HO 10: Top tips for initial and diagnostic assessment**
- HO 11: Resources**

Appendices

- Appendix 1: Guidance on initial and diagnostic assessment**
- Appendix 2: Sample test questions**
- Appendix 3: Case studies**
- Appendix 4: Using sort cards for learner self-assessment**

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

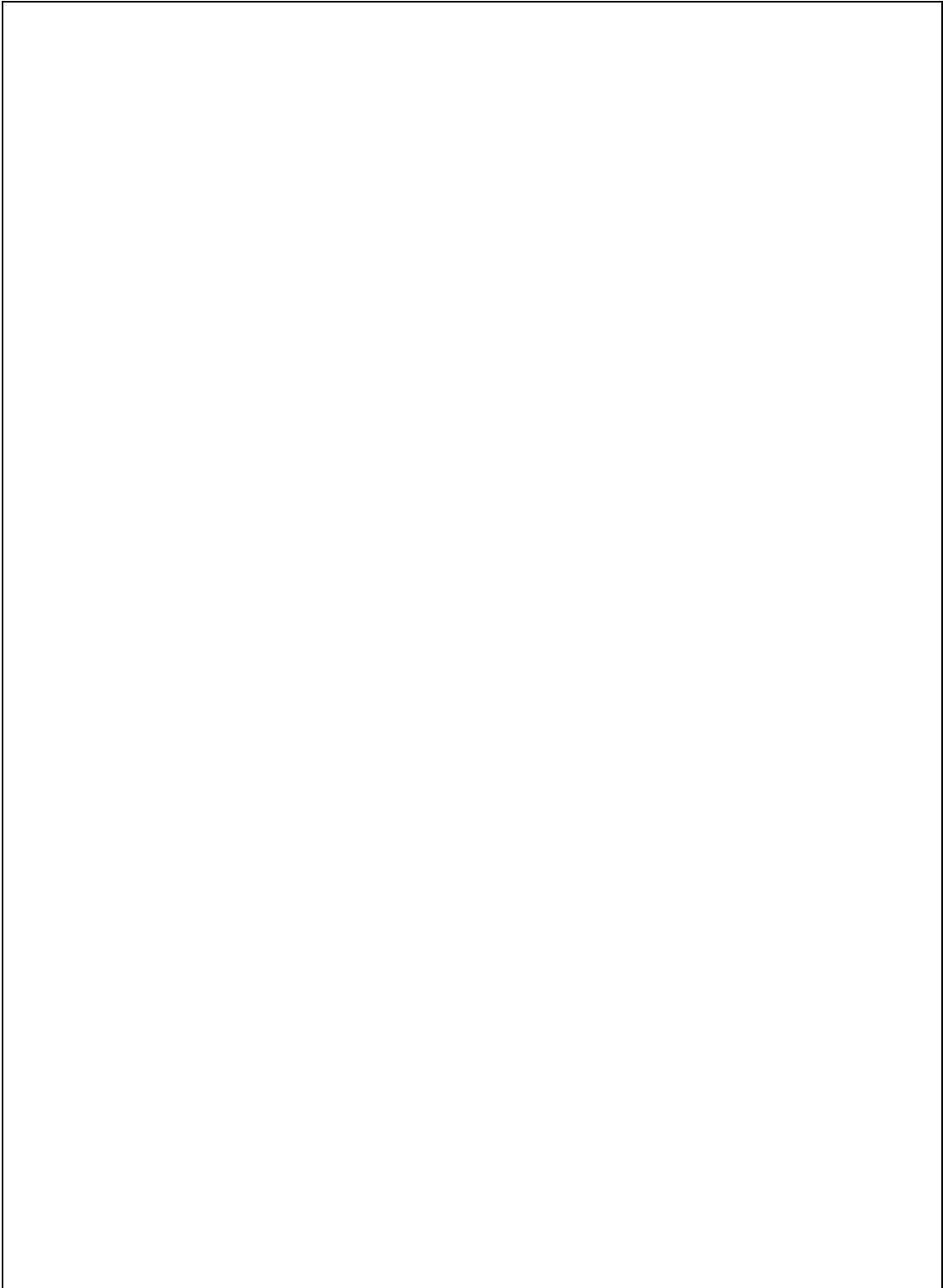
Use this sheet to record any issues and actions that arise during each section.

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. It occupies the central portion of the page.

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

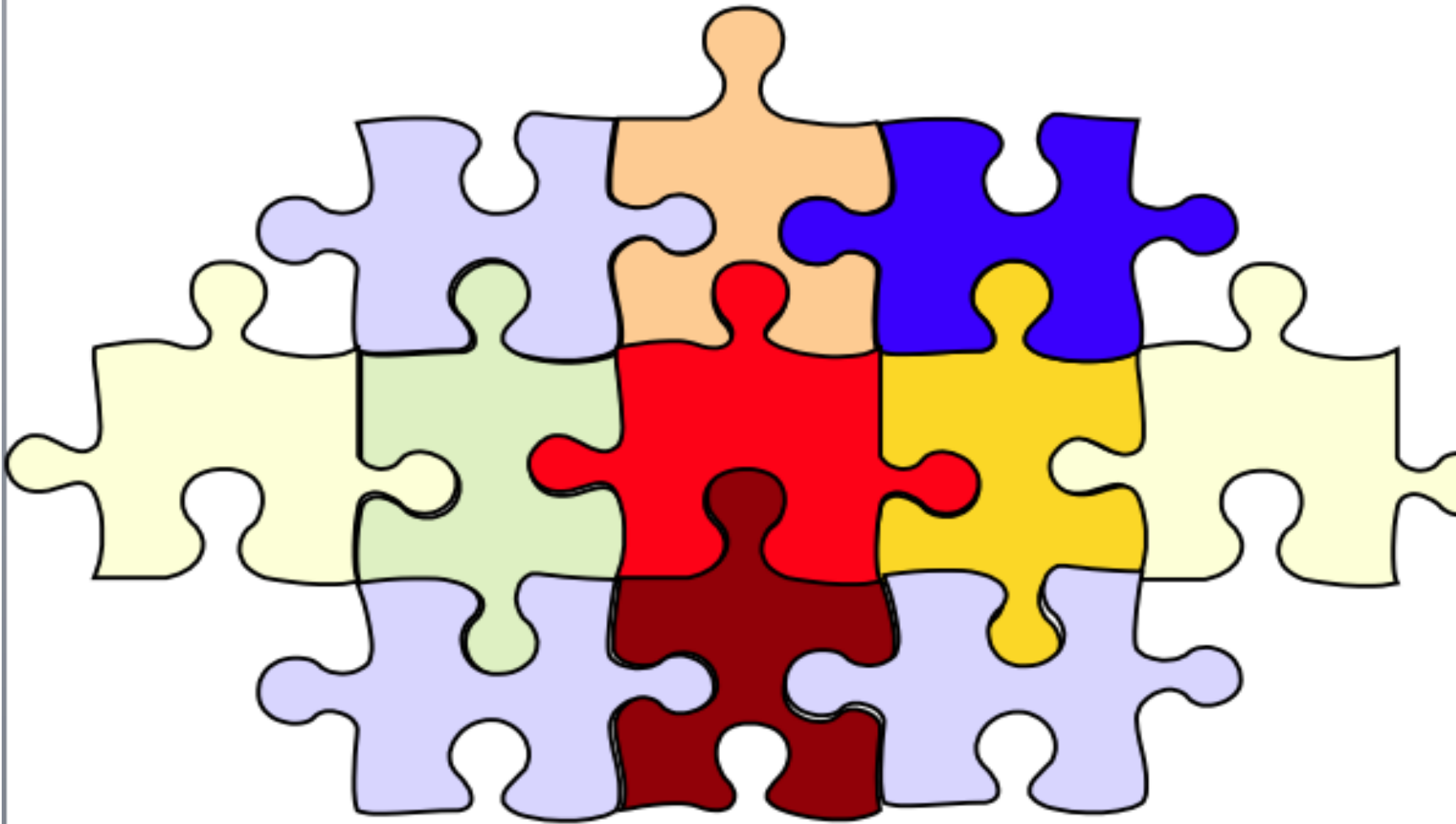
Method	Comment
Documents	
Self-assessment	
Discussions	
Assessment tools	
Structured activities	
Observation	
Other methods	

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. 	
<p>A range of methods is used as part of the initial assessment process.</p>	

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://tlp.excellencegateway.org.uk/tlp/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://tlp.excellencegateway.org.uk/tlp/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.

[Images showing 4 watches]

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	I believe in gardening organically for a number of reasons:
GROW YOUR OWN	<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.
VEG	
HERBS	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!
FRUIT	
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	
B	tell the reader how long Salina's Vegetable Garden has been in business	
C	persuade the reader of the benefits of using organic products	
D	tell the reader how to get to Estrick	

(Total for Question 1 = 1 mark)

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

A	in different countries	
B	without using chemicals	
C	using good quality fertilizer	
D	by experienced staff	

(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.	
B	It sells bird food.	
C	It offers advice free of charge.	
D	It has been open nearly 1 year.	

(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.