



Basic / key skills test

Adult literacy / communication

Level 2

Test specification

Introduction

- 1 The communication key skill qualification will be awarded to candidates who are able to demonstrate that their attainment meets national standards in communication in both their portfolio of evidence and an external assessment (hereafter referred to as a test). The adult literacy qualification will be awarded to candidates who are successful in the national adult literacy test.
- 2 For key skills, the test provides external assessment for each level. The test is externally set and marked. The purpose of the test is to assess reading and those technical aspects of writing that can be assessed in a fixed-response test.
- 3 Performance in the test is used to complement and support performance in the internal assessment component, the portfolio of evidence of the key skills. The portfolio must contain evidence of the candidate's purposeful and effective application of skills in reading, writing, speaking and listening, which meets the full requirements of part B of the key skill standards. The portfolio evidence is internally assessed and externally moderated/verified. A candidate must satisfy the requirements of both components to be awarded the key skill. There is no portfolio requirement for the national adult literacy qualification.
- 4 The purpose of this specification is to inform the development of tests for adult literacy and the communication key skill at level 2 by clarifying those aspects of the specifications which may be tested.
- 5 This specification is intended to provide writers, editors and reviewers, and also teachers and candidates, with detailed information about the acceptable content, coverage and demand for questions, together with the range of suitable contexts for questions at level 2. The specification is also intended to support the development of question banks that will be used to produce individual tests on demand.
- 6 This test specification is also intended to support the development of tests and items which may be re-used, as required.
- 7 This specification should be read in conjunction with:
 - *Level 2 communication key skills standards* (QCA, CCEA, ACCAC, 2004)
 - *The key skills qualifications standards and guidance* (QCA, CCEA, ACCAC, 2004)
 - *Adult literacy standards, level 2* (DfES, 2000)

- *Adult literacy curriculum, level 2* (DfES, 2000).

- 8 This specification has been designed to support the development and production of tests in English, Welsh and Gaelge for key skills and English and Gaelge for adult literacy.

Design of tests

Principles

- 9 In creating tests, writers must take the following into account:
- the test will last for 1 hour
 - the test will consist of 40 multiple-choice questions, each worth 1 mark
 - candidates will be supervised while taking the test
 - candidates may not use dictionaries.
- 10 The specification is complemented by awarding body instructions to centres on the conduct of tests and guidance on arrangements for candidates with special requirements.

Scope and demand of tests

- 11 The test must match the identified requirements of the communication standards at level 2. This means that the test will focus on specific aspects of part A of the key skill standards, entitled 'You need to know how to', as well as drawing on part B, 'You must'. There is no oral test, so speaking and listening will be tested only through the portfolio of evidence. For the purpose of this specification, the requirements are organised into skill areas (see below).
- 12 The communication key skill standards have been aligned with the national curriculum orders for English, Welsh and Gaelge for England, Wales and Northern Ireland. At level 2 this means that information on expectations may be drawn from the national curriculum level descriptions for level 6 and associated programmes of study. The national standards for adult literacy are aligned with the communication key skills standards. The skill areas show the links between the key skills communication and the adult literacy standards.

Pass mark

- 13 The test will be designed to have a predetermined pass mark of 26–28 out of 40. Responsibility for setting the final pass mark for each paper resides with the awarding bodies acting jointly

Form of questions

- 14 The test consists of multiple-choice questions. The terms and phrases used to describe the possible demands of questions (for example 'select') are based upon this form of test. The use of multiple-choice questions necessarily restricts the test to those aspects of the standards that are suitable for testing in this way. The skills of discussion (C2.1a) and of giving a short talk (C2.1b) cannot be assessed in the context of the test, which will focus on the skills of understanding in reading and those aspects of writing identified below.
- 15 Each question is in multiple-choice form with four potential answers, of which one is correct (the key) and three are wrong (the distractors). Each distractor must be plausible but incorrect in some significant respect, which is evident to a candidate appropriately prepared for the test. The requirement of each question must be clear and unambiguous.

- 16 Each question should encourage the candidate to reason correctly and work things out carefully. Questions should be designed to discourage guessing by ensuring that the four alternative answers offered are sufficiently plausible to ensure that candidates must undertake the necessary thinking in order to find the correct answer.
- 17 There will be no 'follow-through' between questions. Finding the correct answer to a question will not depend on having answered the previous question correctly.
- 18 All questions must avoid making demands on candidates beyond the scope of the communication skills being assessed. In particular, all language used in the questions and source material should be simple and direct. Only information relevant to the questions should be included. Expectations of knowledge or familiarity with specialist contexts, concepts and terms beyond those associated with the communication skills being assessed must be avoided.

Structure of tests

- 19 Tests will be made up of groups of questions based on a range of source material. Scenarios will usually consist of short passages of text, such as letters, tables, memos, leaflets, etc. At least two groups of questions will be based on longer, more complex material.

Context

- 20 The tested components are concerned with reading and summarising information and writing documents. Examples of contexts which provide opportunities to develop suitable questions include:
- family and home
 - leisure activities, including holidays
 - education and training
 - work
 - community and citizenship
 - media and communications
 - shopping
 - social issues.
- 21 Some candidates will be familiar with a particular context and others may not have this advantage. Some candidates may not have been on an overseas holiday; young candidates may have limited experience of citizenship or of shopping; older candidates may be less familiar with some sports or hobbies. This does not mean that such contexts should always be avoided but sufficient descriptions and/or images may be necessary to ensure that they are understood by all concerned. A range of source material will be used in each test to minimise potential disadvantage. In all source material it is essential to be brief, to use simple language and to avoid jargon.
- 22 The adult literacy dimension of this test means that particular care should be taken in this respect. The adult literacy tests are likely to be accessed by a broader age group than those taking the key skills tests. A particular consideration is that candidates for the adult literacy tests may have no recent experience of education / training.
- 23 Every effort must be made to ensure that source material is free of any form of bias (for example gender, ethnic, age) which might favour or disadvantage any candidate or group of candidates.

Skill areas and mark allocations

Skill area 1	Reading / understanding writing techniques	30 marks
Skill area 2	Proofreading	10 marks
	Total	40 marks

Skill area 1: Reading / understanding writing techniques

Six clusters	Marks per cluster	Marks per paper
<p>2.1 Reading for information and understanding</p> <p>2.1.1: skim documents to gain a general idea of content and scan documents to identify the information needed</p> <p>Standards for adult literacy</p> <p>This category can include items which assess candidates ability to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> use organisational features (and systems) to locate... information use different reading strategies to find and obtain information (eg <i>skimming, scanning</i>) <p>2.1.2: identify main points, ideas and lines of reasoning from text and images</p> <p>Standards for adult literacy</p> <p>This category can include items which assess candidates' ability to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> trace and understand the main events of continuous descriptive, explanatory and persuasive texts identify the main points and specific detail read an argument and identify the points of view 	<p>up to 1</p> <p>up to 3</p>	<p>1 – 5</p> <p>10 – 14</p> <p>Total: 15</p>
<p>2.1 Understanding writing techniques</p> <p>2.2.1: recognise the writer's intentions (eg <i>by tone, vocabulary, structure of text</i>)</p> <p>Standards for adult literacy</p> <p>This category can include items which assess candidates' ability to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> identify the purpose of a text and infer meaning which is not explicit read critically to evaluate information and compare information, ideas and opinions from different sources read and understand technical vocabulary <p>2.2.2: (Recognise how other writers) use different formats for presenting information, including essays, reports and articles</p> <p>Standards for adult literacy</p> <p>This category can include items which assess candidates' ability to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> use format and structure to organise writing for different purposes <p>2.2.3: (Recognise how other writers) structure writing to help readers follow and understand the main points (eg <i>use paragraphs, headings and sub-headings</i>)</p> <p>Standards for adult literacy</p> <p>This category can include items which assess candidates' ability to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> present information and ideas in a logical or persuasive sequence, using paragraphs where appropriate <p>2.2.4: (Recognise how other writers) use different styles of writing to suit different purposes (eg <i>persuasive techniques to present arguments, technical vocabulary, supporting evidence for reports</i>)</p> <p>Standards for adult literacy</p> <p>This category can include items which assess candidates' ability to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> use formal and informal language appropriate to purpose and audience use different styles of writing for different purposes (eg <i>persuasive techniques, supporting evidence, technical vocabulary</i>) 	<p>Up to 1</p> <p>Up to 1</p> <p>Up to 1</p> <p>Up to 1</p>	<p>4 - 6</p> <p>1 – 3</p> <p>2 – 4</p> <p>2 – 4</p> <p>Total: 15</p>

30 marks

Skill area 2: Proofreading

Two clusters	Marks per cluster	Marks per paper
<p>Proofreading</p> <p>This category can include items which draw on the following skills:</p> <p>2.3: proofread and, where necessary, redraft documents so that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • spelling is accurate including familiar technical words • sentences are formed correctly with accurate use of conjunctions (<i>eg use of but, then, because, consistent use of tense</i>) punctuation is accurate including use of commas, apostrophes and inverted commas <p>Standards for adult literacy</p> <p>This category can include items which assess candidates' ability to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • construct complex sentences • use correct grammar (<i>eg subject-verb agreement, correct and consistent use of tense</i>) • use pronouns so that their meaning is clear • punctuate sentences correctly and use punctuation accurately (<i>eg commas, apostrophes, inverted commas</i>) • spell correctly words used most often in work, studies and daily life including familiar technical words • proofread and revise writing for accuracy and meaning 	<p>5</p>	<p>10</p>

10 marks