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**Ymateb i Ymgynghoriad / Consultation Response**

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<b>Dyddiad / Date:</b>	05.02.2026
<b>Pwnc / Subject:</b>	Response re Consultation on the Design Requirements for new Essential Skills Wales Qualifications

**Background information about Estyn**

Estyn is the Office of His Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales. As a Crown body, we are independent of the Welsh Government.

Our principal aim is to raise the standards and quality education and training in Wales. This is primarily set out in the Learning and Skills Act 2000<sup>1</sup> and the Education Act 2005. In exercising its functions, we must give regard to the:

- Quality of education and training in Wales;
- Extent to which education and training meets the needs of learners;
- Educational standards achieved by those receiving education and training in Wales;
- Quality of leadership and management of those education and training providers, including whether the financial resources made available to those providing education and training are managed efficiently and used in a way which provides value for money;
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of learners; and,
- Contribution made to the well-being of learners.

Our remit includes (but is not exclusive to) nurseries and non-maintained settings, primary, secondary, special and all age schools, independent schools, pupil referrals units, further education, adult community learning, local government education services, work-based learning, and initial teacher training.

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<sup>1</sup> This act to be replaced by the Tertiary Education and Research (Wales) Act 2022 when the quality provisions are commenced.

We may give advice to the Welsh Parliament on any matter connected to education and training in Wales. To achieve excellence for learners, we have set three strategic objectives:

- Provide accountability to service users on the quality and standards of education and training in Wales;
- Inform the development of national policy by the Welsh Government;
- Build capacity for improvement of the education and training system in Wales.

This response is not confidential.

## **Response**

### **Introduction**

Our thematic report, [Delivery of Essential Skills Wales qualifications in apprenticeship programmes 2023](#), raised concerns about the suitability of essential skills Wales (ESW) qualifications for use in apprenticeship programmes. Our concerns centred around the time that apprentices had to complete their ESW qualifications over the relatively short period of their apprenticeship, the significant learning challenge often faced by learners to develop the skills needed for their ESW assessments, and an assessment model for ESW qualifications which was largely generic and required learners to apply skills in contexts often unrelated to their vocational background.

We note that the policy to continue to require learners to attain ESW qualifications as part of apprenticeships frameworks is beyond the scope of this consultation and the remit of Qualifications Wales, and that the proposed changes are intended to be inclusive of work-based learners.

Our view is that the proposed changes will go some way to alleviating our concerns about the suitability of ESW qualifications in apprenticeships. We welcome the proposal to reduce the overall assessment time, to unitise assessment allowing learners to resit the units they have not achieved, and to improve the manageability of assessment for centres. However, the 'generic' context of the qualification content means that learners, especially those in work-based learning contexts, are likely to continue to struggle to engage and that teaching will be focussed on passing the test, rather than developing useful skills in context.

We broadly support the proposed content of the three qualifications, which reflects useful updating to skills required, particularly in relation to AI.

We support the proposal to rename the qualifications to Essential Literacy-, Numeracy- and Digital Skills. Although it does not appear to be stated in the document, we assume that the suite in its entirety would remain 'Essential Skills Wales' qualifications, to retain the brand recognition of the suite.

We support the proposal for flexible, internal assessment at entry level; and external assessment only at levels 1 and 2.

We understand the rationale for removing entry 1 and 2 qualifications in Digital skills and agree that alternative qualifications exist which adequately meet the needs of this segment of learners.

Although we understand the rationale for the removal of the level 3 qualification in all titles, we are concerned that this sends a signal that skills development for learners who are not specialising in mathematics, English or Cymraeg, or digital subjects peaks at level 2, and disagree that there are equivalent qualifications with the same recognition as ESWs that fill the equivalent niche. We would welcome guidance or incentives that continued to encourage skills development throughout level 3 programmes.

We welcome the proposal to retain the option for candidates to sit some elements of their ES Literacy qualification in Cymraeg and some in English, and that their certificate should recognise this. It is not clear from the proposal if candidates will be able to undertake different elements of their assessments for ES Numeracy and Digital Skills in English and Cymraeg. We would support such a proposal.

## **Consultation questions**

### **Part A: Suite level qualification purposes that span qualifications in all subject areas**

#### **The purpose of Essential Skills Qualifications**

We propose the Essential Skills Wales qualifications should:

- be designed primarily for post-16 Learners
- be designed primarily for use in Further Education and Work-based Learning
- reflect the essential transferable skills that are needed in learning, work and life

In addition to these broad purposes:

- Entry level Essential Skills Wales qualifications should support learners to progress to level 1 and 2 in their respective subjects
- level 1 and level 2 Essential Skills Wales qualifications should support learners to progress to employment and further study in a range of sectors and subjects

**Q1: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed purposes?**

**Agree**

**Q2: Please give a reason for your answer**

Our thematic report, [Delivery of Essential Skills Wales qualifications in apprenticeship programmes 2023](#)) raised concerns about the suitability of essential skills Wales (ESW) qualifications for use in apprenticeship programmes.

We note that the policy to continue to require learners to attain ESW qualifications as part of apprenticeships frameworks is beyond the scope of this consultation and the remit of Qualifications Wales, and that the proposed changes are intended to be inclusive of work-based learners.

Our view is that the proposed changes will go some way to alleviating our concerns about the suitability of ESW qualifications in apprenticeships. We welcome the proposal to reduce the overall assessment time, to unitise assessment allowing learners to resit the units they have not achieved, and to improve the manageability of assessment for centres. However, the 'generic' context of the qualification context means that learners, especially those in work-based learning contexts, are likely to continue to struggle to engage and that teaching will be focussed on passing the test, rather than developing useful skills in context.

**Q3: Do you wish to comment on design proposals for Essential Skills Wales Application of Number qualifications?**

**Yes**

## **Part B: Design proposals for Application of Number qualifications.**

### **Aims – Application of Number**

We propose the following aims for the Essential Application of Number Skills qualifications:

#### **At entry level, the qualification should enable learners to develop:**

- confidence in applying and using numerical skills to solve simple problems
- an understanding of how numeracy skills are used in mostly familiar contexts
- fluency in using and applying mathematical techniques and procedures to solve simple problems

- the ability to use digital technology, including calculators to solve simple problems
- a basic awareness of the concept of financial literacy and its application in simple contexts

**At levels 1 & 2, the qualification should enable learners to develop:**

- confidence in applying and using numerical skills to solve multistep problems
- an understanding and appreciation of how numeracy skills are used in authentic real-world contexts
- fluency in using and applying mathematical techniques and procedures to solve problems
- the ability to use digital technology, including calculators, confidently and efficiently, to help solve mathematical problems
- an increasingly developed understanding of financial literacy and its application in more complex contexts

**Q4: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the propose aims?**

**Agree**

**Q5: Please give a reason for your answer**

**Content – Application of Number**

Using the findings of the Essential Skills Wales review and working with stakeholders, we have updated the Essential Application of Number Skills [content proposals](#).

In summary, we have:

- added additional content relating to financial literacy
- improved differentiation between levels
- removed content in relation to planning
- re-ordered content to fit under the following disciplines:
  - Number
  - Geometry and Measures
  - Statistics
- included calculator and non-calculator content
- considered content in other qualifications to ensure there is a sufficient level of comparability

**Q6: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed content?**

**Agree**

**Q7: Please give a reason for your answer**

### **Assessment at Level 1 and 2 – Application of Number**

Using the findings of the Essential Skills Wales review and working with stakeholders, we propose the following approach to assessing level 1 and level 2 Essential Application of Number Skills:

#### **Assessment 1**

- externally set test
- on-screen
- on-demand
- auto-marked
- instant results
- mix of calculator and non-calculator questions
- paper alternative available for those individuals or centres that have a preference for a paper version

#### **Assessment 2**

- externally set test
- paper-based or on-screen
- on-demand
- human marked
- appropriate turn-around time for results
- calculator allowed
- paper alternative will be available where awarding bodies choose to develop an on- screen test

#### **Total assessment time:**

- Level 1: Total assessment time 1 hour and 45 minutes (time split between assessment 1 and 2 TBC)

- Level 2: Total assessment time 2 hours (time split between assessment 1 and 2 TBC)

### **The qualification will be unitised**

The majority of questions will be set in a range of contexts. We propose those contexts will be:

- personal contexts which could include but are not limited to:
  - personal finance
  - personal health
  - travel
- careers, employment and work-based contexts which could include but are not limited to:
  - timekeeping
  - payroll
  - finances
- societal contexts which could include but are not limited to:
  - economy
  - demographics
- scientific, technological and environmental contexts could include but are not limited to:
  - climate
  - medicine
  - computing

The move to an assessment model that is entirely based on external tests is in response to the manageability issues raised by stakeholders.

We have heard that some learners prefer and benefit from an on-screen test which comes with the opportunity for auto marking and a swift return of results. Therefore, we propose retaining those features in *Assessment 1*. A paper-based alternative will be available for those centres or learners who prefer a paper copy.

*Assessment 2* replaces the need for a controlled task. Removing the controlled task will significantly reduce the overall assessment time and remove the need for centres to conduct any internal assessment. We have received feedback that the contexts used in the current controlled tasks are not engaging for learners. By removing the controlled task, learners will cover a wider range of contexts relating to life, learning and work. The suggested contexts are listed above.

The proposed test time is longer than the current confirmatory test. However, this will still be significantly shorter than the overall test time in the current Essential Application of Number Skills qualification. This will allow awarding bodies to ask more questions and

assess the content in a shorter space of time, thereby providing a more efficient way for learners to demonstrate what they know, understand and can do. The small number of questions in the current tests mean that there is little room for error for learners in terms of the number of incorrect responses they give before they fail.

The qualification will be unitised meaning learners will get a result for each unit. Learners will need to pass both assessments to be awarded the qualification. Learners will be allowed to resist both assessments. If learners are unsuccessful in one assessment, they will only need to re-sit that assessment.

While a calculator will be available for most of *Assessment 1*, we have heard from stakeholders that solving mathematical problems without a calculator is still an important skill. Therefore, we propose that there will be some questions where a calculator will not be allowed. It will be up to the awarding bodies to consider the logistical issues of removing access to a calculator in both the digital and paper versions of the assessments.

**Q8: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed assessment arrangements for level 1 and level 2?**

**Agree**

**Q9. Please give a reason for your answer**

We support the proposal to reduce the overall time for assessment, and to improve manageability. We agree that unitised assessment will be beneficial and may support engagement.

### **Assessment at entry level – Application of Number**

At entry level, we do not think there needs to be a test. Instead, we think the qualification can be assessed internally for example through a portfolio of evidence, or a series of tasks. We think this makes the assessment more flexible and is a better approach for learners taking the qualification at this level.

We would require awarding bodies to periodically update and create new tasks that centres could use to generate assessment evidence to help ensure that the tasks available remain relevant and engaging throughout the lifetime of the qualification.

**Q10: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed assessment arrangements for entry level?**

**Strongly agree**

**Q11: Please give a reason for your answer**

Internal assessment is more suitable for this cohort of candidates.

**Level 3 Essential Application of Number Skills**

Our review of Essential Skills Wales found that Level 3 Essential Application of Number Skills qualification has low uptake. Working with stakeholders, we understand the main reasons for learners taking level 3 essential skills qualifications are:

- practitioners wanting to upskill for delivery of level 2 qualifications
- learners who want to push themselves further
- a small number of apprenticeship frameworks that require a level 3 in essential skills

We believe there are alternative qualifications that can more effectively provide opportunity to upskill and provide more demand for learners.

The current apprenticeship frameworks are due to be updated. If level 3 Essential Skills Wales qualifications are not available, they will no longer be able to be included as a requirement on the frameworks. This would make the framework requirements more similar to those in England where Functional Skills does not exist at level 3 and so the frameworks can only require level 2.

To ensure learners in Wales do not have an additional hurdle compared to their counterparts in England, we propose that Level 3 Essential Application of Number Skills will no longer be available after the legacy Essential Skills Qualifications are replaced by the newly reformed qualifications.

**Q12: Are there any impacts we have not identified that would arise from removing Level 3 Essential Application of Number skills?**

We understand the rationale for the removal of the level 3 qualification in all titles. However, we are concerned that this sends a signal that skills development for learners who are not specialising in mathematics, English or Cymraeg, or digital subjects peaks at level 2, and disagree that there are equivalent qualifications with the same recognition as ESWs that fill the equivalent niche. We would welcome strong guidance or incentives to encourage continued development of literacy, numeracy and digital skills for learners of level 3 programmes or courses, without the requirement for external assessment.

**Qualification title**

We propose renaming the qualification to better reflect the range of content being assessed. We suggest renaming the qualification to Essential Numeracy Skills.

**Q13: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed title of the qualification?**

Agree

**Q14: Please give a reason for your answer**

**Q15: Do you have any other comments that you would like to make on the proposals for Essential Skills Wales Application of Number qualifications?**

n/a

**Q16: Do you wish to comment on design proposals for Essential Skills Wales Communication qualifications?**

Yes

### **Part C: Design proposals for Communication qualifications**

#### **Aims - Communication**

We propose the following aims of the Essential Communication Skills qualifications:

**At entry level, the qualification should enable learners to use their communication skills and apply them to a range of contexts, with some direction and guidance.**

- Speaking and listening
  - present information with increasing clarity, accuracy and effectiveness at each level
  - make relevant contributions to discussions with others in familiar contexts
  - listen and respond to the contributions of others
  - listen, understand and respond to spoken language in a range of mostly familiar contexts
  - adapt what they say for different audiences and contexts
- Reading
  - extract meaning and understand information from a range of simple texts in familiar contexts with different format and purpose
  - understand a range of vocabulary and simple sentence structures
- Writing
  - express themselves in writing in familiar contexts, with increasing accuracy and effectiveness
  - use appropriate vocabulary, and have a sound grasp of spelling, punctuation and grammar
  - adapt their writing for different contexts

**At level 1 & 2, the qualification should enable learners to use their communication skills independently and confidently, applying them to a range of formal and informal contexts.**

- Speaking and listening
  - present information, ideas and points of view with clear, accurate, effective and confident use of spoken language
  - participate in discussions with others, making relevant contributions and developing ideas in a range of contexts
  - listen and understand the contributions of others during a discussion and respond appropriately
  - listen, understand and respond to spoken language in a range of familiar and unfamiliar contexts
  - adapt their delivery and content to suit the purpose and audience
  
- Reading
  - extract meaning and understand information, ideas and points of view from a wide range of different text types in familiar and unfamiliar contexts
  - understand a wide range of vocabulary, sentence structures and time frames
  
- Writing
  - express themselves through clear, accurate and effective use of written language
  - use appropriate and specialist vocabulary and correct spelling, punctuation and grammar
  - adapt their writing to suit the purpose and audience in a range of contexts

**Q17: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed aims?**

**Agree**

**Q18: Please give a reason for your answer**

### **Content – Communication**

Using the findings of the Essential Skills Wales review and working with stakeholders, we have updated the [Essential Communication Skills content proposals](#).

In summary, we have:

- revised content to include more meaningful and differentiated statements of the required level of proficiency in spelling, punctuation and grammar at each level
- clustered statements on related skill areas within each level of the qualifications to better enhance the clarity and meaningfulness of the structure of the content
- improved differentiation between levels
- retained content under the areas of:
  - speaking and listening
  - reading
  - writing
- grouped ‘Speaking and listening’ content into 3 categories:
  - listen and respond
  - speak to communicate
  - engage in discussion
- considered content in other similar qualifications to ensure there is a sufficient level of comparability

We have also drafted slightly different content to account for differences between English and Cymraeg. For example, where apostrophes are used in English but not in Cymraeg and where mutations are used in Cymraeg but not in English.

We considered two separate qualifications to be completed wholly in English or in Welsh. However, working with stakeholders, we understand the importance of some learners being able to take some aspects of the Essential Communications Skills assessments in English and other aspects in Cymraeg. Two separate Communications qualifications for English and Cymraeg would have removed the option for learners to take part of the qualification in Cymraeg and part of the qualification in English which likely would have resulted in fewer assessments taken through the medium of Cymraeg and therefore negatively impact on the Welsh language. The option for learners to take part of the Essential Communication Skills qualification in Cymraeg and part in English is already in place for the current Essential Communication Skills.

When talking with stakeholders, they also felt it was important that learners are recognised for which language they undertake the Essential Communication Skills assessments in.

**We propose that there will continue to be one Essential Communication Skills qualification, where learners will be able to take part of the assessment in English (e.g. the reading and writing assessment) and part in Cymraeg (e.g. the speaking and listening). We propose that the certificate should state which language each assessment has been completed in.**

**Q19: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed content?**

**Strongly agree**

**Q20: Please give a reason for your answer**

We welcome the proposal to retain the option for candidates to sit some elements of their ES Literacy qualification in Cymraeg and some in English, and that their certificate should recognise this.

**Assessment at Level 1 and 2 – Communication**

Using the findings of the Essential Skills Wales review and working with stakeholders, we propose the following approach to assessing Level 1 and Level 2 Essential Communication skills:

**Assessment 1**

- assessing reading and writing
- externally set test
- on-screen
- on-demand
- appropriate turn-around time for results
- paper alternative available for those individuals or centres that have a preference for a paper version

**Assessment 2**

- assessing speaking and listening
- externally set assessment
- on-demand
- internally marked and externally moderated

**Assessment timings****Level 1**

Total assessment time: Maximum of 1 hour 50 minutes

Assessment 1: 1 hour 30 minutes (30 minutes reading, 1 hour writing)

Assessment 2: Group discussion minimum of 10 minutes for a group of 3-6 learners, 20 minutes for larger groups

**Level 2**

Total assessment time: Maximum of 2 hours 15 minutes

Assessment 1: 1 hour 45 minutes (45 mins reading, 1 hour writing)

Assessment 2: Group discussion minimum of 10 minutes for a group of 3-6 learners, 20 minutes for larger groups Presentation/talk minimum of 4 minutes

## **The qualification will be unitised**

The majority of questions and tasks will be set in a range of contexts. We propose those contexts will include:

- everyday communication
- communication in the workplace
- digital communication, including social media
- communication for employability
- communication for leisure

The proposed assessment aims to significantly reduce the overall assessment time. To make the assessments as manageable as possible, we suggest there should be two assessments.

We propose Assessment 1 will be in 2 parts. The first part will assess reading, using closed responses and will assess reading comprehension and inference skills. The second part will assess writing. Learners will be required to construct two forms of writing for different purposes. One piece of writing will assess a learner's ability to impart information, and the other will assess their ability to write persuasively. While some stakeholders were keen to see only one writing task, employers told us it was important that learners can write in a range of formats. The expected lengths of the written texts in terms of the word count will be consistent with the word counts in the current qualifications.

We have heard the current approach to assessing spelling, punctuation and grammar (SPAG) via the reading task is not an authentic way of assessing those skills. We propose the SPAG is tested as part of the writing part of the assessment. The use of dictionaries and spellcheckers will not be allowed within the writing task.

We suggest Assessment 2 will focus on assessing speaking and listening which would be similar to the way they are currently assessed, including the overall approach and timings. We considered a separate listening assessment, similar to approaches seen in the way listening is assessed in international language qualifications. However, we recognise that this would increase the assessment burden for learners, centres and awarding bodies. We therefore recommend that listening is assessed alongside speaking to minimise manageability issues. In the current Essential Communication Skills qualifications, the direct assessment of listening only accounts for a very small number of marks. In the reformed qualifications we will strengthen the assessment criteria for listening skills so that a higher proportion of the marks in the assessment are allocated to listening skills.

The qualification will be unitised meaning learners will get a result for each unit. Learners will need to pass both assessments to be awarded the qualification. Learners will be allowed to re-sit the test.

**Q21: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed assessment arrangements for level 1 and level 2?**

**Agree**

**Q22: Please give a reason for your answer**

### **Assessment at Entry Level – Communication**

At entry level, we do not think there needs to be a test. Instead, we think the qualification can be assessed internally for example through a portfolio of evidence, or a series of tasks. We think this makes the assessment more flexible and is a better approach for learners taking the qualification at this level. We would require awarding bodies to periodically update and create new tasks that centres could use to generate assessment evidence to help ensure that the tasks available remain relevant and engaging throughout the lifetime of the qualification.

**Q23: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed assessment arrangements for entry level?**

**Agree**

**Q24: Please give a reason for your answer**

### **Level 3 Essential Communication Skills**

Our review of Essential Skills Wales found that Level 3 Essential Communication Skills has low uptake. Working with stakeholders, we understand the main reasons for learners taking level 3 essential skills qualifications are:

- practitioners wanting to upskill for delivery of level 2 qualifications
- learners who want to push themselves further
- a small number of apprenticeship frameworks that require a level 3 in essential skills

We believe there are alternative qualifications that can more effectively provide opportunity to upskill and provide more demand for learners.

The current apprenticeship frameworks are due to be updated. If Level 3 Essential Skills Wales qualifications are not available, they will no longer be able to be included as a requirement on the frameworks. This would make the framework requirements more similar to those in England where Functional Skills does not exist at level 3 and so the frameworks can only require level 2. To ensure learners in Wales do not have an additional hurdle compared to their counterparts in England, we propose that Level 3 Essential

Communication Skills will no longer be available after the legacy Essential Skills Qualifications are replaced by the newly reformed qualifications.

**Q25: Are there any impacts we have not identified that would arise from removing Level 3 Essential Communication Skills?**

We understand the rationale for the removal of the level 3 qualification in all titles. However, we are concerned that this sends a signal that skills development for learners who are not specialising in mathematics, English or Cymraeg, or digital subjects peaks at level 2, and disagree that there are equivalent qualifications with the same recognition as ESWs that fill the equivalent niche. We would welcome strong guidance or incentives to encourage continued development of literacy, numeracy and digital skills for learners of level 3 programmes or courses, without the requirement for external assessment.

**Qualification title**

We propose renaming the qualification to better reflect the range of content being assessed. We suggest renaming the qualification to Essential Literacy Skills.

**Q26: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed title of the qualification?**

**Agree**

**Q27: Please give a reason for your answer**

We support the proposal to rename the qualifications to Essential Literacy-, Numeracy- and Digital Skills. Although it does not appear to be stated in the document, we assume that the suite in its entirety would remain 'Essential Skills Wales' qualifications, to retain the brand recognition of the suite.

**Q28: Do you have any other comments that you would like to make on the proposals for Essential Communication Skills?**

**Q29: Do you wish to comment on design proposals for Essential Skills Wales Digital Literacy qualifications?**

**Yes**

**Part D: Design proposals for Digital Literacy qualifications**

**Aims – Digital Literacy**

We propose the following aims for the Essential Digital Literacy Skills qualifications:

**At entry level, the qualification should enable learners to:**

- interact safely in a digital world and to understand the concept of a digital footprint
  - organise, create, present and store digital information
  - select and use digital information appropriately
  - use appropriate digital tools to collaborate with others, including knowing when to digitally collaborate
- create a digital resource with appropriate direction and guidance
- explore the use of AI in familiar contexts

**At level 1 & 2, the qualification should enable learners to:**

- understand the importance of digital responsibility
- understand how to work safely including managing their digital footprint
- use digital technologies, tools, techniques and a range of features to complete a task
- develop an understanding of how to maintain devices and resolve common digital issues
- manage and use digital information successfully to complete a task
- use digital collaboration effectively and efficiently and understand how digital collaboration can be used in personal and professional practice
- understand how a digital creative solution can be used to complete a task or solve a problem
- understand how AI can be used in familiar and unfamiliar contexts
- appreciate the main impacts of AI (including environmental) and its limitations

**Q30: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed aims?**

**Agree**

**Q31: Please give a reason for your answer**

**Content – Digital Literacy**

Using the findings of the Essential Skills Wales review and working with stakeholders, we have updated the [Essential Digital Literacy Skills content proposals](#).

In summary, we have:

- included relevant content relating to Artificial Intelligence (AI)
- improved differentiation between levels
- drafted content to be broad enough to remain relevant when there are advances in digital technology

- drafted content so that it is software and application agnostic
- kept content under the following broad subject areas:
  - digital responsibility
  - digital productivity
  - digital information literacy
  - digital collaboration
  - digital creativity
- considered content in other digital qualifications to ensure there is a sufficient level of comparability

**Q32: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed content?**

**Agree**

**Q33: Please give a reason for your answer**

### **Assessment at Level 1 and 2 – Digital Literacy**

Using the findings of the Essential Skills Wales review and working with stakeholders, we propose the following approach to assessing Level 1 and Level 2 Essential Digital Literacy skills:

#### **Assessment 1**

- externally set test
- on-screen
- on-demand
- auto marked
- instant results
- paper alternative available for those individuals or centres that have a preference for a paper version

#### **Assessment 2**

- externally set assessment or, assessment developed by the centre and agreed by the awarding body On-demand
- to be completed digitally
- internally marked and externally moderated

#### **Assessment timings**

##### **Level 1**

Total assessment time up to: 4 hours

Assessment 1: up to 30 mins

Assessment 2: up to 3 hours and 30 minutes

## Level 2

Total assessment time up to: 4 hours 45 mins

Assessment 1: up to 45 mins

Assessment 2: up to 4 hours

We are aware that the structured discussion used in the existing qualification, results in manageability issues. For example, in terms of having to schedule and organise the discussion with multiple candidates at the same time. Stakeholders have also suggested the assessment is artificial, lacks validity as it does not assess the skills relevant to the subject and functions more like a question-and-answer session than a genuine discussion.

We propose the structured discussion is removed and replaced by a more manageable and relevant externally set on-screen test. A paper-based alternative will be available for those centres or learners who prefer a paper copy. The test would primarily focus on assessing the content relating to digital responsibility and some aspects of digital information literacy. We would like to see results for the digital version of the test to be instantly available but we recognise there will be instances where awarding bodies will need additional time. This will especially be the case when new tests are introduced.

Some stakeholders stated a preference for more externally set tests as a way of assessing the entirety of the content for Essential Digital Literacy Skills. We have considered this feedback. However, we are unconvinced that all the skills within the qualification can be validly assessed using a test, particularly in the areas of Digital Creativity and Digital Collaboration. Instead, we are of the view that these aspects of the content are better assessed using a controlled task.

To ensure the assessments are as manageable as possible for learners and those delivering the qualifications, we are proposing to significantly reduce the total assessment time by shortening the length of the controlled task. The assessments will need to reflect the reduced assessment time to ensure what is being assessed is proportionate to the time available.

The qualification will be unitised meaning learners will get a result for each unit. Learners will need to pass both assessments to be awarded the qualification. Learners will be allowed to resit the test.

**Q34: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed assessment arrangements for level 1 and level 2?**

**Agree**

**Q35: Please give a reason for your answer**

**Assessment at Entry Level 3 – Digital Literacy**

At entry level 3, we do not think there needs to be a test. Instead, we think the qualification can be assessed internally for example through a portfolio of evidence, or a series of tasks. We think this makes the assessment more flexible and is a better approach for learners taking the qualification at this level. We would require awarding bodies to periodically update and create new tasks that centres could use to generate assessment evidence to help ensure that the tasks available remain relevant and engaging throughout the lifetime of the qualification.

**Q36: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed assessment arrangements for entry level 3?**

**Strongly agree**

**Q37: Please give a reason for your answer**

### **Entry Level 1 and 2 Essential Digital literacy Skills, and Level 3 Essential Digital Literacy Skills**

Our review of Essential Skills Wales found that Entry Level 1 and 2 Essential Digital Literacy Skills, and Level 3 Essential Digital Literacy Skills have low uptake.

We believe the very low uptake at entry level 1 and 2 is a result of a trend over time of learners becoming more digitally literate due to increased exposure to digital technology. Therefore, content at entry level 1 and 2 is less relevant than it was when it was originally drafted.

Working with stakeholders, we understand the main reasons for learners taking level 3 essential skills qualifications are:

- practitioners wanting to upskill for delivery of level 2 qualifications
- learners who want to push themselves further
- a small number of Apprenticeship Frameworks that require a level 3 in essential skills

The current apprenticeship frameworks are due to be updated. If Level 3 Essential Skills Wales qualifications are not available, they will no longer be able to be included as a requirement on the frameworks. We believe there are alternative qualifications that better suited for learners at entry 1 and 2, and at level 3.

We are aware that digital functional skills in England only exist at entry level 3 and level 1. However, we believe there is still a value and purpose to entry level 3, level 1 and level 2 in Essential Digital Literacy Skills. We propose that Entry Level 1 and 2, and Level 3 Essential Digital Literacy Skills will no longer be available after the legacy Essential Skills Qualifications are replaced by the newly reformed qualifications.

**Q38: Are there any impacts we have not identified that would arise from removing Entry Level 1 and 2 Essential Digital Literacy skills?**

**Q39: Are there any impacts we have not identified that would arise from removing Level 3 Essential Digital Literacy skills?**

We understand the rationale for the removal of the level 3 qualification in all titles. However, we are concerned that this sends a signal that skills development for learners who are not specialising in mathematics, English or Cymraeg, or digital subjects peaks at level 2, and disagree that there are equivalent qualifications with the same recognition as ESWs that fill the equivalent niche. We would welcome strong guidance or incentives to encourage continued development of literacy, numeracy and digital skills for learners of level 3 programmes or courses, without the requirement for external assessment.

**Qualification title**

We propose renaming the qualification to better reflect the range of content being assessed. We suggest renaming the qualification to Essential Digital Skills.

**Q40: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed title of the qualification?**

**Agree**

**Q41: Please give a reason for your answer**

**Q42: Do you have any other comments that you would like to make on the proposals for Essential Digital Literacy Skills?**

**Impact Assessment Questions**

**Q43: Are there any regulatory impacts, including costs, savings or other benefits, that have not been identified arising from the proposals? If yes, what are the impacts and are there any additional steps that could be taken to minimise the regulatory impact of the proposals? Please provide estimated figures around costs where possible.**

**Q44: Are there any other potential impacts we have not identified? If so, what are they and what additional steps could be taken to lessen any negative impact on those people?**

**Q45: How could positive impacts on the Welsh language be increased, or negative impacts be lessened? Are there any other potential impacts we have not yet identified? If so, what are they?**

We welcome the proposal to retain the option for candidates to sit some elements of their ES Literacy qualification in Cymraeg and some in English, and that their certificate should recognise this. It is not clear from the proposal if candidates will be able to switch between languages in their assessments for ES Numeracy and Digital Skills. We would support such a proposal.

**Q46: Do you have any other comments that you would like to make on the proposals for Essential Skills Wales qualifications?**