CENTRE GUIDE

g gateway
qualifications

Digital Functional Skills

(Entry Level 3 – Level 1)

Contents

Introduction

This guide is for all those involved in the delivery and assessment of the Entry Level 3 and Level 1 Digital Functional Skills Qualifications (DFSQ). It provides information and guidance on meeting the assessment and quality assurance requirements for this suite of qualifications. It should be made available to any Centre staff involved in the administration, delivery, assessment, and quality assurance of the Digital Functional Skills Qualifications.

It should be read in conjunction with:

- Qualification Specification for Entry Level 3 DFSQ
- Qualification Specification for Level 1 DFSQ
- Instructions for the Conduct of DFSQ Assessments
- Digital Functional Skills Subject Content
- Centre Handbook

Please note that Gateway Qualifications recommends the retention of mock assessments to support learners in the unlikely event that the government determines that exams and/or assessments cannot go ahead.

DFSQ assessment model

Each qualification is assessed by a single assessment. The assessments are:

- externally set by Gateway Qualifications
- available on demand
- accessed via Gateway Qualifications' Surpass online assessment system

Entry Level 3 assessments are:

- marked within a Centre by tutors/assessors
- internally quality assured by an Internal Quality Assurer (IQA)
- externally quality assured by Gateway Qualifications' Digital External Quality Assurers (EQA)

Level 1 assessments are:

- externally marked by Gateway Qualifications
- quality assured by Gateway Qualifications

Qualification	Entry Level 3	Level 1
Assessment structure	A single assessment component	A single assessment component
Duration	1 hour 30 minutes, plus 15 minutes for observed tasks	2 hours
Conditions	Supervised conditions	Invigilated conditions
Total marks	50	64

Each learner sitting a DFSQ Entry Level 3 or Level 1 assessment will automatically be allocated an assessment from the assessment bank in Surpass, the online testing system. There will be a number of assessments for each level in the Surpass assessment bank at any one time to allow learners to re-sit the assessment if required. Each assessment consists of a combination of tasks, short answer questions and multiple-choice questions (MCQs). While the content of the questions and tasks varies between assessments in the assessment bank and over time, the structure remains the same, and there will be consistency in the coverage of the DFSQ standards.

Assessment weightings

The weightings for each skill area have been determined by:

- the volume and nature of their content
- the extent to which it contributes to helping learners achieve digital skills in line with the purpose of the qualification
- their demand.

Entry Level 3 skill area	Weighting	Marks
1. Using devices and handling information	24-30%	12-15
2. Creating and editing	24-30%	12-15
3. Communicating	18-24%	9-12
4. Transacting	6-12%	3-6
5. Being safe and responsible online	6-12%	3-6

Level 1 skill area	Weighting	Marks
1. Using devices and handling information	30%	16-19
2. Creating and editing	38-42%	24-27
3. Communicating	9-14%	6-9
4. Transacting	9-14%	6-9
5. Being safe and responsible online	5-9%	3-6

Overview

The qualification is designed to enable Centres to tailor programmes to meet the needs of different learners in various learning contexts. Regardless of the choices you make about the programme design, these are the stages of the quality assurance process for each level:

Entry Level 3	Level 1
Planning	Planning
Training and standardisation	Training
Assessment	Assessment
Marking, internal sampling and feedback	*The annual compliance visit
External Quality Assurance and feedback	
*The annual compliance visit	

(*) The annual compliance visit will cover all Gateway Qualifications' qualifications delivered by the Centre.

In this guide, we have provided information on the requirements at each stage. Good practice tips have been included throughout.

Before you start

Recognition and approval

Firstly, your Centre needs recognition as a Centre by Gateway Qualifications and then approval to offer Digital Functional Skills qualifications.

If Digital Functional Skills is the first qualification from Gateway Qualifications your Centre is offering, you will need to complete the Gateway Qualifications Centre Recognition Application.

If your Centre already offers one or more qualifications provided by Gateway Qualifications, you can move straight to the application to offer Digital Functional Skills.

Further information can be found on our website.

Centre roles and responsibilities

As part of the recognition and approval process, you will be required to provide information and contact details for individuals carrying out qualification-specific roles in your Centre. This demonstrates that appropriately qualified and experienced staff are available to undertake the administration, teaching and assessment of the qualifications according to Gateway Qualifications requirements. The **key roles and responsibilities** required for the delivery and assessment of Digital Functional Skills are detailed on our website.

You should store and maintain staffing information on your Centre record in Prism.

Note: At least two staff must be involved in the assessment and quality assurance of Entry Level 3 as no member of staff can quality assure their own marking.

Planning, training, and support

Mandatory training sessions

Depending on which levels of the qualification your Centre is approved to deliver, there are up to two mandatory training requirements:

1. Delivering and Assessing DFSQ - Guidance & Support
2. Assessment & Internal Quality Assurance of Entry Level 3 Digital Functional Skills

Following approval to deliver DFSQ, you will be sent details of how to access the training Delivering & Assessing DFSQ – Guidance & Support.

The short mandatory training will be in the format of a pre-recorded session and will be available on demand through a secure link. At least one member of staff involved in delivering DFSQ must sign up and watch this session, but we recommend this is made available to the delivery team.

Assessment and Internal Quality Assurance of Entry Level 3 Digital Functional Skills: Standardisation Event

Centres only delivering Level 1 DFSQ do not need to attend this session. Sessions will be in the form of webinars and will be held at regular intervals throughout the year.

Before marking of the Entry Level 3 assessments begins, at least one member of staff with responsibility for Entry Level 3 DFSQ must attend the standardisation event; Assessment and Internal Quality Assurance of Entry Level 3 DFSQ. This is likely to be an IQA, but we encourage as many of the delivery staff, tutors and IQAs to attend as possible.

The purpose of the standardisation event is to provide a clear understanding of how to apply a DFSQ Entry Level 3 mark scheme so there is consistent application across all Centres. A Digital External Quality Assurer (EQA) will lead the session and will standardise across an entire Entry Level 3 assessment. The agenda will include:

- illustrated explanations of how to apply the mark scheme to the different tasks
- the opportunity to practise applying the mark scheme to exemplar assessments with feedback provided by an EQA

Following the session, this staff member must disseminate information from the standardisation event to the tutors/assessors to ensure all tutors/assessors are able to mark to the national standard.

Good practice tip
Ideally, all tutors/assessors in a Centre attend the same training session within the Centre or the same Gateway Qualifications session as a way of providing a shared induction to the requirements. This could also help the IQA identify further training needs within the DFSQ team.

Further support from Gateway Qualifications

Digital Functional Skills pages of our website

- Qualification specification and national standards
- Centre guide
- Instructions for the Conduct of DFSQ Assessments
- DFSQ Start-up checklist
- Full Surpass guides for Centres and candidates
- Quick Start paper-based guide to Surpass
- Surpass short "How-To...." videos
- Initial assessment tool: online version
- Webinar booking calendar and link

Prism – DFSQ Qualification Library, Documents section

- Initial assessment tool: paper-based version
- Free teaching resources
- Digital Glossary for learners
- Sample Assessment Materials DFSQ at both levels
- Webinar Calendar, with links to register for the events
- IQA Sampling Forms for Entry Level 3

To locate documents available in Prism:

- Navigate to the Qualification Library
- Search for the qualification
- Switch to the Documents page

Surpass

- Mock assessments (both levels) may be booked through Surpass

Accessing the qualification for Centre Staff

Should a Centre wish to offer the DFSQ qualification for Centre staff, the assessment team/IQA should complete a Centre Declaration of Interest form.

Assessment taking

There are specific rules regarding the controls applied to the conduct of assessments at Entry Level 3 and Level 1. These can be found in the **Instructions for the Conduct of DFSQ Assessments** document on our website.

Mock assessments

Mock assessments are available in Surpass once learners have been registered. Both Entry Level 3 and Level 1 mock assessments are Centre-marked by tutors in the Surpass system.

Good practice tip
Follow the instructions in our Surpass guidance to ensure you book a mock rather than a live assessment.

Quality assurance

Internal quality assurance

Quality assurance plan

To support the quality assurance process, the Internal Quality Assurer (IQA) is advised to create a quality assurance plan.

As a Centre, you may have multiple groups following a DFSQ programme concurrently and/or in overlapping or sequential cycles. Whatever delivery model is selected, it is advisable to create a quality assurance plan annually or for as long a period as possible that is appropriate to your Centre's delivery cycles. The plan should ensure the assessment and quality assurance requirements are met by all staff. It will also help to ensure staff are engaged and supported in complying with requirements.

The grid below indicates the key activities and dates to include in the quality assurance plan. This relates solely to Entry Level 3, as Level 1 is externally marked and quality-assured.

Activity	When?	Notes
Initial guidance and standardisation of Entry Level 3	Before any Entry Level 3 assessments are marked.	Mandatory Entry level 3 standardisation event.
Ongoing training	To be scheduled at appropriate times to support the ongoing delivery of the programme.	The IQA identifies individual and team training needs and plans training sessions accordingly.
Entry Level internal standardisation	Before the first assessment and throughout the programme.	Following attendance at the above event, IQA to cascade training to teams. Alternatively, tutors/markers may attend the live session. Additional standardisation activities can be scheduled to support the team as appropriate.
Observed tasks	Prior to the Surpass assessments.	Observation records can be uploaded by assessors at the time of marking.
Surpass assessment bookings	Minimum of 5 days before assessment date.	
Assessment sessions	On the date of the booked assessment.	
Marking	Entry Level 3 marking and upload of observation record	To be completed within 14 days of the end of the assessment.
IQA sampling	In accordance with dates in the Centre sampling plans.	IQAs coordinate with the tutors/assessors on when they intend to complete their marking in order to schedule the sampling.
Submitting for external quality assurance	Within 30 days of assessments being sat.	IQA emails quality@gatewayqualifications.org.uk attaching IQA Sampling Form

Sampling

Sampling is a key element of the quality assurance process whereby the IQA:

- checks the quality and consistency of each tutor/assessor's application of the mark scheme
- maintains a common standard of marking within the Centre over time

Tutors/assessors' marking should be sampled as soon as possible after they have completed the marking to provide feedback and allow time for any remedial action if required.

As some questions are computer-marked, only some parts of each assessment are marked by tutors/assessors and require sampling.

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Good practice tip

The IQA establishes a DFSQ team that meets regularly to build a shared understanding of qualification delivery, including assessment preparation, reasonable adjustment requirements, standardisation, and sampling.

The IQA briefs the team on the assessment plan, the approach to quality assurance and record keeping.

On an ongoing basis, the IQA disseminates communications from Gateway Qualifications and ensures the team has access to current information about the qualifications.

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Record keeping

The IQA must keep records of the sampling undertaken for each tutor/assessor using the sampling forms, which can be downloaded from Prism, and using Marker Comments in Surpass. Brief IQA comments should be recorded using Marker Comments, where appropriate (for example, if an IQA changes a mark).

This will aid in the identification of marking trends and inform the selection of samples on an ongoing basis. Sampling forms must be stored securely within the Centre and be made available to Gateway Qualifications as part of the Centre Compliance Monitoring if requested. They should also be sent to the Quality Team when advising that internal quality assurance has taken place. Centres should keep these records for three years.

Selecting the sample

Selecting an appropriate sample is critical to successful internal quality assurance. There is a range of factors that influence the selection of samples. On the first occasion they are sampled, the **minimum** sample for an assessor should include:

- five learners' assessments
- a range of marks, including the highest and lowest marks

The IQA should adjust the size of the sample by considering a number of risk factors:

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The experience and expertise of the assessor
Take account of an assessor's level of familiarity with the subject area and the qualification level. Are they a tutor for this qualification as well as an assessor? Have they taught similar qualifications at this level previously? Are they new to teaching?

The number of learners in the class
The sample size may need to be adjusted to reflect the volume of marking the assessor has undertaken for anyone sitting. For example, are they marking a class of more than 15 learners? Is the assessor marking more than one class?

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The range and pattern of marks awarded
The total marks for the paper: e.g. are there a spread of total marks, or are the marks falling within narrow parameters? If there are clusters of learners on mark totals, sample to find out if this is justified. The marks for individual tasks: e.g. are the full range of marks being used appropriately for each task? Further sampling may be required to verify that marks have been awarded appropriately.

The range of assessments
Within a class, learners may have been allocated different assessments from the assessment bank. Include at least one of each assessment in the sample. If an assessor is marking an assessment for the first time alongside assessments they have marked previously, the sample should focus on the new assessments.

The outcomes from standardisation activities
Check the standardisation records. How confident was the assessor in their interpretation and application of the mark scheme? Were there any specific types of tasks or questions where they had difficulties applying the mark scheme? If a similar trend is seen in the sampling, it may be a reason to increase the sample size.

After the first awards have been issued, the minimum sample is three learners' assessments per tutor/assessor. The samples selected should take into account lessons learned from the feedback and outcomes from the first round of internal and external quality assurance. The IQA should continue to keep the sampling plans for each tutor/assessor under review as the risk factors may change once the qualification becomes established in a Centre and assessors become more familiar with the standards and approach to marking.

Quality assuring a sample

Once the sample has been selected, the candidate number and assessor's name should be recorded on the Sampling Form.

The IQA should review the marks awarded for each task in Surpass, including the sub-marks for activities within a task, and record any disagreement regarding the mark awarded in the Marker Comments section of Surpass, assigning a new mark if appropriate.

Once they have reviewed each script in the sample, the IQA should look for trends to decide whether there is a consistent pattern in any divergence. They should note the source(s) of divergence (e.g., task 4, part b is always under-rewarded by 1 mark) and the reason (e.g. a particular point in the mark scheme has been overlooked or there has been a subjective interpretation of the mark scheme).

The IQA should consider any comments the tutor/assessor made on the script in Surpass, as this may help to explain the reason for the divergence. If necessary, the IQA should extend the sample until they are confident they have seen sufficient evidence to confirm the marking is accurate or take other actions.

If there is more than one tutor/assessor involved in the marking of a cohort of learners, the IQA should complete the sampling of all assessors before the external quality assurance stage of the process can begin.

The IQA should give feedback on the results of the sampling to each tutor/assessor.

Adjusting marks

Following the IQA sampling, there are three possible next steps for the IQA.

Minor errors identified
If the IQA has identified any minor errors in a tutor/assessor's marking (e.g., a single question has been marked erroneously in one script only), the IQA may correct the mark in Surpass. Within feedback to the tutor/assessor, the IQA should let them know this has happened and ask the tutor/assessor to check other scripts to make sure the error has not been repeated elsewhere. The tutor/assessor then confirms there are no other errors (or another error has been corrected).

Inconsistent marking or mark scheme misapplied consistently
If there are inconsistencies in the marking or the mark scheme has been misapplied consistently for one or more questions, the IQA should provide feedback explaining the issues and ask the tutor/assessor to re-mark those questions for all their learners in Surpass. When the re-marking is complete, the IQA should carry out a further check to confirm the mark scheme has now been applied appropriately.

IQA satisfied
If the IQA is satisfied that the sampling has shown that all tutor/assessor marking is in line with the standards, the IQA should submit results.

Submitting results

The Centre should complete the marking and internal quality assurance processes within 30 days of the assessment taking place unless there are exceptional circumstances. This is to avoid delays in issuing results to learners.

The IQA should then advise Gateway Qualifications that the sample is ready for external quality assurance by emailing the IQA Sampling Form to the Quality Team at quality@gatewayqualifications.org.uk.

External quality assurance

A Digital External Quality Assurer (EQA) appointed by Gateway Qualifications will carry out the external quality assurance of the Entry Level 3 DFSQ assessments remotely on the Surpass online assessment system.

The Digital EQAs will have experience in assessing digital qualifications at the level of the DFSQs, and they:

- will be responsible for sampling the Centre marking of assessment tasks on Surpass
- will check the standard of marking is in line with the mark scheme and assessment guidance and marking is consistent across the Centre
- will refer to IQA and tutor/assessor marks and comments stored in Surpass
- are responsible for escalating any marking concerns to the Principal EQA and reporting any suspected malpractice issues

- will keep a record of the sampling selection and decisions for each Centre to which they are allocated.

The Principal EQA oversees the external quality assurance and is responsible for managing the assessment sampling and reviewing of all Digital EQAs.

If the Digital EQA identifies any issues with the standard of marking, they may extend the sample. If the outcome of the EQA's sampling is that a Centre's marking is deemed to be out of line with the standards, Gateway Qualifications will decide on the best course of action. The Centre may be provided with feedback and asked to re-mark the assessments or sections of the assessment depending on the nature of the issue.

Once the Digital EQA confirms they are satisfied with the standard of marking, Gateway Qualifications authorises the release of results to the Centre. In the early stages of the qualification, results will be issued within a month or less of a Centre submitting work for external quality assurance. Results will be issued more speedily once the qualification is established. Gateway Qualifications will provide the Centre with a brief report on the quality of the marking.

<table>
<tr><td>Good practice tip</td></tr>
<tr><td>The outcomes of the internal and external quality assurance can be shared with the team as part of learning and development and/or used by the IQA to plan future standardisation activities.</td></tr>
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Maintaining confidentiality

The confidentiality of the assessments and mark schemes must be maintained throughout the assessment and quality assurance processes. The marking must be carried out in a location where the confidentiality of the assessments and mark schemes can be maintained. **Any downloaded mark schemes must be deleted or destroyed after marking.**

Information about the assessments must not be disclosed or discussed other than with other tutors/assessors and the IQA for the purposes of internal standardisation. Details or screenshots of live assessments must not be included in any emails.

Internal standardisation

There are different ways of approaching internal standardisation.

You may already have standardisation practices which are suitable for DFSQ assessments. A commonly used internal standardisation approach is for the IQA to hold a DFSQ team standardisation event using the materials supplied at the Gateway Qualifications event prior to marking commencing.

1	The sample assessment materials and mock assessments on Surpass can be used as practice assessments with learners, followed by standardisation and marking activities by the tutor/assessors.
2	The IQA can carry out an initial check on the application of the mark scheme once assessments have been sat. Each assessor marks two scripts for each assessment paper taken by their learners, and the IQA reviews their marking, recording the assessor's mark and their final mark for each script on the standardisation record sheet. The IQA provides feedback and, if necessary, requests a further sample of marking for review. Once the IQA is satisfied, the assessor applies the mark scheme accurately, and they give the go-ahead for the remainder of the scripts to be marked.
3	Gateway Qualifications will build a bank of standardisation materials over time to support standardisation within Centres. These materials can be used as trial marking exercises in DFSQ team training sessions or individually by tutors/assessors. The IQA could review the outcomes and, either individually or within a DFSQ team meeting, provide feedback to help tutors/assessors adjust their application of the mark scheme in line with the commentaries.

Good practice tips

The IQA may identify from the standardisation activities whether there is a particular assessment paper or a task within a paper that appears to present challenges for one or more assessors. The source of the difficulty should be identified and noted on the standardisation record, and additional guidance should be provided to avoid inconsistent marking further down the line. The paper or item could also be targeted for additional IQA sampling. The IQA should also refer to the record when standardising and sampling any subsequent sittings of the assessment paper(s).

Marking

Entry Level 3: Marking

Tutors/assessors must complete marking within the Surpass system and carry it out in accordance with the instructions provided in the Mark Scheme. The Mark Scheme is provided within Surpass. As some questions are computer-marked, only some parts of each assessment are marked by tutors/assessors.

Any details of marking decisions should be recorded in Surpass Marker Comments. Observation Records should also be uploaded at this time.

Marking should be completed within 14 days of an assessment being taken.

Once the tutor/assessor has completed marking a script, it should be submitted, and they should let their IQA know the assessments are ready to be sampled.

Good practice tip
The IQA leads a review of the mark scheme with all the teams involved in marking a cohort before the marking starts. This provides an opportunity to flag and resolve any queries and aids consistent application.

Level 1: Marking

Results

Gateway Qualifications will endeavour to provide results for candidates within six working days of the assessment taking place. This will not be possible under certain circumstances, specifically:

- where a candidate sits a new paper which has not been through the awarding process
- where malpractice or maladministration is suspected, and further investigation is required.

Enquiries about results

Thorough quality checks take place before results are issued. However, there is an enquiry about results process should further confirmation be required of a learner's results.

The enquiry about results process involves a clerical check of marks and procedures followed prior to the issue of results.

Requests must be submitted within 20 working days of the results being issued. Gateway Qualifications may apply a charge.

For further details and to apply for an enquiry about results, complete the form on our website.

Appeals

Should you wish to appeal a result, this must be made within 20 working days of the date of the publication of the decision which is being appealed. If the appeal is being made on behalf of a learner, written permission must be obtained from the learner concerned, as results can go down as well as up as a result of an investigation.

Appeals will be conducted in accordance with our Appeals Procedure. Gateway Qualifications may apply a charge.

To appeal an assessment decision, complete the Appeals Form on our website.

Direct Claim Status (centre authorisation to release results)

Direct Claim Status (DCS) is not available for DFSQ.

Centre monitoring

Resits

Following an unsuccessful assessment result, learners must be provided with an opportunity to improve their skills prior to any resit being booked.

Resit patterns will be closely monitored.

Annual compliance visit

As part of an annual compliance visit, an EQA will monitor compliance with the qualification approval criteria for DFSQ to validate procedures for delivery of the qualifications and assessment. Their findings will be included in the Centre's Quality Monitoring Report, and actions will be set where required. The Centre will be given a Centre risk rating.

As part of the qualification delivery monitoring process, from time to time, Centres will be asked by the Quality Team to provide the following:

- Invigilation reports
- Attendance records
- Internal quality assurance reports
- Records and evidence relating to any reasonable adjustments

These documents will be reviewed and reported on by an EQA, with feedback and any actions provided to the Centre. The outcome will contribute to the Centre's risk rating for DFSQ.

Version and date	Change detail	Section/Page Reference
1.0 (June 2023)	n/a	n/a
1.1 (June 2024)	Update to locations of key documents	Pg8, 9
1.2 (April 2025)	Addition of statement in introduction regarding the recommendation for retention of mock assessments.	Pg3