

Frequently asked questions

www.cityandguilds.com
March 2010
Version 1.3
(Revised September 2010)

1	General questions	3
1.1	What is Essential Skills Wales?	3
1.2	What levels is ESW available at?	3
1.3	Why has ESW been developed?	3
1.4	How will ESW be funded?	3
1.5	Have Key Skills and Adult Numeracy/Literacy been scrapped in Wales?	3
1.6	Are ESW qualifications available anywhere other than in Wales?	3
1.7	How does ESW relate to Functional Skills?	3
1.8	We have learners in both England and Wales. Which qualifications will they be expected to do?	4
1.9	Is Essential Skills Wales any different from Essential Skills in Northern Ireland?	4
1.10	Is ESW on the QCF? Does each qualification have a credit value?	4
2	About the ESW qualifications	5
2.1	Where can I access the ESW standards?	5
2.2	How different are the standards from key and basic skills?	5
2.3	Does each level of ESW incorporate the requirements at the level(s) below?	5
2.4	Can candidates be awarded a 'spiky profile'?	5
2.5	Will our teaching and learning practice need to change?	5
2.6	Are candidates who complete only part of the qualification (eg only Reading within ESW Communication) able to claim partial achievement?	5
2.7	Are there any proxy qualifications for ESW?	6
2.8	Will learners doing GCSE English/Welsh, Mathematics and ICT also get ESW qualifications?	6
2.9	Will there be UCAS points for ESW?	6
2.10	Is there be an ESW Support Programme (like the Key Skills one)?	6
2.11	Are there be any qualification requirements to teach ESW?	6
2.12	Will Key Skills and basic skills still be valid qualifications?	6
3	Assessment of ESW	7
3.1	How are ESW qualifications assessed?	7
3.2	Are the portfolio evidence requirements for ESW very different from Key Skills?	7
3.3	Is there still a 'Part A' and a 'Part B'?	7
3.4	Does the core curriculum (for adult numeracy and adult literacy) still apply?	7
3.5	Is there any amplification or guidance to help us understand the evidence and skills requirements?	7
3.6	Is it still be possible to do a test/exam if our learners prefer this?	7



4	Transition to ESW from Key and basic Skills	8
4.1	When did the old qualifications end?	8
4.2	Do existing candidates have to transfer to ESW?	8
4.3	How does the transition work for Key Skills learners?	8
4.4	How does the transition work for Entry level basic skills learners?	8
4.5	How does the transition work for Level 1-2 basic skills learners?	8
4.6	I've heard Adult Numeracy/Literacy and Key Skills are continuing in England. How come we can't still access them in Wales?	9
4.7	I thought the last certification date for Key Skills and Entry level Adult Numeracy/Literacy was August 2012. Why is it 2011 in Wales?	9
5	ESW and City & Guilds	10
5.1	Why work with City & Guilds?	10
5.2	What support will City & Guilds be offering us?	10
5.3	How do we get approval to offer ESW with City & Guilds?	10
5.4	How has City & Guilds handled the transition arrangements?	10
5.5	How does City & Guilds assess Entry level?	10
5.6	What fees does City & Guilds charge for ESW?	11
5.7	Why isn't City & Guilds offering ESW at Level 4?	11
6	Future of the wider Key Skills	12
6.1	What's happened to the wider Key Skills?	12
6.2	Why is there a new City & Guilds qualification number for the wider Key Skills?	12
7	Apprenticeships, Welsh Bac and other programmes	13
7.1	How does the discontinuation of Key Skills and implementation of ESW affect Modern Apprenticeships, Welsh Bac, etc?	13
7.2	Will the Key Skills requirements for Welsh Bac change?	13
7.3	Do SSCs/SSBs accept ESW as part of their apprenticeship frameworks?	13
7.4	Will the 'Relaxation Rule' still apply within Modern Apprenticeships?	13
7.5	Will learners from England with Functional Skills qualifications have to do ESW if they move to Wales?	13



1 General questions



1.1 What is Essential Skills Wales?

Essential Skills Wales (ESW) is a new suite of skills qualifications designed by the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills (DCELLS).

Launched on **1 September 2010**, these qualifications have replaced the Key Skills of Communication, Application of Number and ICT, as well as the 'basic skills' of Adult Numeracy, Adult Literacy and ICT Skills for Life.

1.2 What levels is ESW available at?

DCELLS has developed ESW standards covering seven levels: Entry 1, 2 and 3, Level 1, 2, 3 and 4. City & Guilds offers ESW qualifications at all of these levels **except** Level 4.

1.3 Why has ESW been developed?

Key and basic skills qualifications have been central to the skills agenda in Wales for the last decade. ESW brings greater clarity and consistency to the WAG policy aim of ensuring everyone masters the skills needed in education, work and life in general by providing a single ladder of progression from Entry 1 to Level 4 in the skills of Communication, Application of Number and ICT.

1.4 How will ESW be funded?

Funding for ESW qualifications is generally on a similar basis to the Key Skills qualifications they have replaced, though for certain types of delivery they may be funded in a different way. For specific queries about funding, you may wish to contact npfs@wales.gsi.gov.uk.

1.5 Have Key Skills and Adult Numeracy/Literacy been scrapped in Wales?

For centres in Wales, the 'first three' Key Skills qualifications, Adult Numeracy, Adult Literacy and ICT Skills for Life closed to new registrations on 31 August 2010. For more information about the transition arrangements see **4, Transition to ESW from Key and basic Skills**.

Although the Key Skills and basic skills qualifications have been withdrawn, the skills developed and recognised by these qualifications remain central to WAG's education and lifelong learning agenda. The only difference is this agenda is now underpinned by one suite of qualifications rather than two.

1.6 Are ESW qualifications available anywhere other than in Wales?

No – ESW is a WAG initiative designed specifically to meet the needs of learners, employers and the wider economy in Wales. The ESW qualifications are only approved by the qualification regulatory authorities for use by centres in Wales (NB: see 1.8 below if your centre operates in both England and Wales).

Note City & Guilds also offers separate skills qualifications in England, Northern Ireland and Scotland aligned to the policy objectives in those countries.

1.7 How does ESW relate to Functional Skills?

DCELLS indicated some time ago that the Functional Skills qualifications recently launched in England would **not** be approved for use in Wales. ESW addresses many of the same policy objectives as Functional Skills, although the ESW standards are more closely aligned to the skills agenda in Wales and the assessment requirements are very different.

1.8 We have learners in both England and Wales. Which qualifications will they be expected to do?

Centres in Wales are not permitted to access the Functional Skills qualifications and centres in England cannot access ESW. Even if a centre in Wales is taking in learners from England, they will still be expected to do ESW rather than Functional Skills (and vice versa).

For large organisations operating in both countries, City & Guilds might be able to set up separate sub-centre numbers to distinguish between your operations in England and Wales. If you think your centre might need this, please speak to your local City & Guilds Business Manager.

1.9 Is Essential Skills Wales any different from Essential Skills in Northern Ireland?

Northern Ireland's Essential Skills strategy and qualifications have been operating for several years. Again, the policy objectives behind Essential Skills NI are not dissimilar to those for ESW, although these qualifications are based on the old Key Skills and Adult Numeracy/Literacy/ICT standards, and have their own assessment and teaching requirements.

1.10 Is ESW on the QCF? Does each qualification have a credit value?

No – the ESW qualifications are on the National Qualifications Framework (**NQF**), the same as Functional Skills and Essential Skills NI.

However, ESW qualifications each carry a credit value for the Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales (CQFW) – at all levels this is **6 credits** per essential skill.



2 About the ESW qualifications



2.1 Where can I access the ESW standards?

The ESW standards, including amplification, guidance and mandatory definitions, are published by DCELLS. They are available to download from the City & Guilds Essential Skills Wales qualification page (www.cityandguilds.com/esw). They can also be accessed from the WAG website.

The Welsh Assembly Government has sent a supply of hard copies of this document to all schools, colleges and training providers. If you require more copies, please contact WAG:

Tel: **0845 603 1108** (English medium)

0870 242 3206 (Welsh medium)

Email: **dcells1@prolog.uk.com**

2.2 How different are the standards from key and basic skills?

The ESW standards were developed by converging and drawing on best practice from the standards for Adult Numeracy, Adult Literacy and Adult ICT, and the standards for the Key Skills of Communication, Application of Number and ICT.

There are minor, but very important, changes to the evidence requirements and to some of the terminology. In practice these changes are more significant for basic skills candidates (especially at levels 1 and 2) than for Key Skills candidates, not least because the assessment is more extensive.

2.3 Does each level of ESW incorporate the requirements at the level(s) below?

Yes it does – the same as for Key Skills. The progression grids published with the ESW standards help to illustrate this.

2.4 Can candidates be awarded a ‘spiky profile’?

No – these are single-unit qualifications. Where a candidate is capable of demonstrating some skills at a higher level than others this should of course be encouraged, although a qualification can only be awarded at the level where 100% of the requirements have been met (NB: the evidence requirements at each level subsume the level(s) below).

2.5 Will our teaching and learning practice need to change?

The skills demanded by ESW are broadly the same, although there have been some adjustment as a result of the Key Skills and Adult Numeracy/Literacy/ICT standards being combined. The impact is likely to be greater for learners who would previously have been doing basic skills qualifications, because of the greater focus on application of these skills in real situations.

All ESW candidates must meet **100%** of the evidence requirements, so ‘teaching to the test’ as a strategy will not work.

2.6 Are candidates who complete only part of the qualification (eg only Reading within ESW Communication) able to claim partial achievement?

No – like Key Skills these are single unit qualifications. At all levels (including Entry), candidates will only be certificated once all of the evidence requirements have been met. In the case of Communication this includes all three components.

2.7 Are there any proxy qualifications for ESW?

No – the proxy exemption arrangements for Key Skills rarely applied in Wales anyway because they nearly always related to the test component (which was discontinued in Wales in 2004). DCELLS has confirmed there are no proxies for the ESW qualifications.

However, learners on Modern Apprenticeships with A*-C GCSEs may still be exempt from needing to achieve Key Skills or ESW qualifications under the ‘Relaxation’ arrangements (see **7, Apprenticeships, Welsh Bac and other programmes**).

Where learners are completing ESW qualifications, they will be able to use the skills developed through other qualifications as part of their evidence for ESW; however the assessment of this evidence must satisfy the ESW requirements.

2.8 Will learners doing GCSE English/Welsh, Mathematics and ICT also get ESW qualifications?

No – ESW are separate qualifications and candidates will need to provide evidence meeting all of the requirements. It might be possible to use appropriate evidence from GCSEs or any other sources, but must always be assessed against the ESW evidence requirements.

2.9 Will there be UCAS points for ESW?

Tariff points are available for ESW at Level 3. The tariff is 20 points per qualification.

2.10 Is there an ESW Support Programme (like the Key Skills one)?

We understand LIPD within DCELLS is intending to offer some support, although this is unlikely to be a high profile ‘support programme’ on the scale of the Key Skills Support Programme Cymru or Basic Skills Wales. They are working with a range of stakeholders to identify what support centres have valued in the past and how this might be further developed for ESW.

City & Guilds is also providing its own package of support to help learners, practitioners and centres adjust to ESW. For more information see **5, ESW and City & Guilds**.

2.11 Are there be any qualification requirements to teach ESW?

There are no additional requirements for those teaching ESW, and no specific mandatory ‘ESW practitioner’ qualifications. However, City & Guilds will need to be satisfied that anyone acting as an ESW assessor or internal verifier is sufficiently confident in their own essential skills, and familiar with the assessment process.

Moreover, the workforce requirements for obtaining the Basic Skills Quality Mark will continue, and Estyn will want to ensure that all staff delivering ESW are fully competent and capable of doing so. In particular, Key Skills tutors and assessors are likely to find that ESW requires more explicit teaching than the old qualifications, and they may need to up-skill accordingly.

2.12 Will Key Skills and basic skills still be valid qualifications?

Yes – in the same way that O Levels didn’t cease to be valid qualifications after GCSEs were introduced or when new occupational standards are introduced for an NVQ. The old qualifications are no longer available to new candidates, although that doesn’t mean learners who hold them should be expected to ‘re-achieve’ the equivalent ESW qualification.



3 Assessment of ESW



3.1 How are ESW qualifications assessed?

At Level 1 and above, all ESW qualifications are assessed by a portfolio of evidence. At Entry level, assessment arrangements vary between awarding organisations. For more information about how City & Guilds' assesses Entry level, see **5, ESW and City & Guilds**.

3.2 Are the portfolio evidence requirements for ESW very different from Key Skills?

Not drastically – in many cases existing Key Skills portfolio evidence will map across, though this does need to be re-assessed to ensure all of the evidence requirements for ESW are met. Where there are gaps (eg for speaking and listening within Communication) these will need to be plugged with additional evidence.

3.3 Is there still a 'Part A' and a 'Part B'?

The ESW standards are in a different format, although like the Key Skills standards they set out what skills candidates need to know how to do and what evidence they must produce. As with Key Skills, the standards are addressed to the candidate (eg 'You must...') rather than to the assessor/tutor.

Experienced Key Skills practitioners will be familiar with this approach, although if you've previously only taught basic skills it might take a little getting used to. In short, the evidence requirements are what will be assessed; the skills are what needs to be taught.

3.4 Does the core curriculum (for adult numeracy and adult literacy) still apply?

The core curriculum documents are a valuable teaching resource, and set out nearly all of the skills ESW candidates are expected to master; however when preparing candidates for ESW, you will need to ensure they are able to demonstrate the skills listed in the ESW standards.

3.5 Is there any amplification or guidance to help us understand the evidence and skills requirements?

Yes the Essential Skills Wales document published by WAG contains the following to help with this:

- Amplification of Evidence Requirements
- Guidance on the skills requirements
- Mandatory Definitions (a glossary of terms used in the standards)
- Progression Overview.

This complete document (with each essential skill/level bookmarked) can be downloaded from **www.cityandguilds.com/esw**.

3.6 Is it still be possible to do a test/exam if our learners prefer this?

Assessment of ESW at Level 1 and above **must** be by portfolio – one of the reasons for replacing the Adult Numeracy/Literacy qualifications with ESW was concern about the suitability of multiple choice tests as an assessment of numeracy and (particularly) literacy.

All ESW candidates are required to meet all of the evidence requirements and must demonstrate practical and purposeful application of these skills. Short tests might be valuable as teaching tools, although they **cannot** form part of the formal assessment. At all levels (including Entry) the assessments must involve purposeful activity and must cover 100% of the evidence requirements.

4 Transition to ESW from Key and basic Skills

4.1 When did the old qualifications end?

The message from DCELLS about this was always very clear: all of the qualifications replaced by ESW had to close to centres in Wales on **31 August 2010**. This included the 'first three' Key Skills qualifications, Adult Numeracy Adult Literacy and ICT Skills for Life.

4.2 Do existing candidates have to transfer to ESW?

It depends. If they have been working towards Level 1-2 Adult Numeracy/Literacy then they will have to switch over to ESW because those tests are no longer available. If they've been working towards Key Skills or the Entry level basic skills qualifications, they have the option of remaining on the old qualifications in the short term, although even then in many cases it will make sense to migrate to ESW.

For more information about how City & Guilds will transfer existing candidates over to ESW see **5, ESW and City & Guilds**.

4.3 How does the transition work for Key Skills learners?

Candidates registered for the Key Skills qualifications (3638-12 or -13) before 31 August 2010 are able to transfer over to ESW (their portfolio evidence will usually map across); alternatively they can continue working towards Key Skills as long as these are certificated before **31 August 2011**.

Any learner not already registered for Key Skills before 31 August 2010 will have to register for ESW (3768-01, -02, 03 or -04) to access Communication, Application of Number and/or ICT.

If they intend to complete any of the wider Key Skills, access to these this is **included** in their ESW registration. However, for learners wanting **only** to access the wider Key Skills there is now a separate Product code (3638-21).

4.4 How does the transition work for Entry level basic skills learners?

Candidates registered for Entry level Adult Numeracy/Literacy and ICT Skills for Life (3792-01 and -02, and 3804) before 31 August 2010 can either transfer over to ESW or stick with the old qualifications as long as these are certificated by **31 August 2011**. The only exception to this is the Entry 3 Adult Numeracy online test (3792-03) which ceased to be available to centres in Wales on 31 August 2010.

Candidates not registered before 31 August 2010 will have to register for the equivalent Entry level ESW qualifications (under 3768).

4.5 How does the transition work for Level 1-2 basic skills learners?

The Adult Numeracy/Literacy multiple choice 'national tests' (3792-11, -12, -13, -14, -21, -22, -23 and -24) are **no longer** available to centres in Wales. Any learners in Wales on a Level 1-2 basic skills programme will now need to register for ESW instead.

Note the tests have been withdrawn in **both** forms: online and paper-based.



4.6 I've heard Adult Numeracy/Literacy and Key Skills are continuing in England. How come we can't still access them in Wales?

The extension to these qualifications beyond 2010 only applies to England, and DCELLS has confirmed these qualifications will **not** be approved for use (or funded) in Wales.

The extension to Adult Numeracy/Literacy and ICT Skills for Life in England is purely a temporary measure whilst the UK Government considers whether Functional Skills is a suitable replacement qualification for adult learners.



The short-term extension to the Key Skills qualifications in England (until 31 March 2011) is solely for learners on apprenticeship programmes. Again, this does **not** apply to Wales.

4.7 I thought the last certification date for Key Skills and Entry level Adult Numeracy/Literacy was August 2012. Why is it 2011 in Wales?

DCELLS has decided to bring forward the last certification date for each of the qualifications replaced by ESW to encourage as many existing candidates as possible to transfer over to ESW. It is intended that candidates should only remain on the old qualifications if already close to completion.

5 ESW and City & Guilds

5.1 Why work with City & Guilds?

City & Guilds is the UK's leading vocational awarding body, trusted by learners and recognised by over 99% of employers*. Our experience of offering basic literacy, numeracy and ICT skills qualifications is unrivalled, as is our ability to link these skills to vocational and real-life situations.

We were one of the first awarding organisations to announce that we would be applying to offer ESW, and we have now been accredited by DCELLS to offer ESW at all levels except Level 4. For details, please see the National Database of Accredited Qualifications: <http://bit.ly/cvm7G2>.

5.2 What support will City & Guilds be offering us?

Here are just a few examples:

- **Events, network meetings and in-house training**
discuss ESW with one of our specialists and how the new qualifications are different from the ones they replace. We're offering a mixture of large and small events, depending on what your needs are. In some cases this support will be free-of-charge.
- **Dedicated webpage and email address**
the email address is esw@cityandguilds.com
the web address is www.cityandguilds.com/esw.
- **Entry level pre-approved assignments, Level 1-3 logbooks and an administration handbook**
available to download from www.cityandguilds.com/esw
- **EV support**
a human face to help you get to grip with the new qualifications and make sure you have everything you need to have in place to make a success of ESW.

5.3 How do we get approval to offer ESW with City & Guilds?

All of our current Key Skills, Adult Numeracy/Literacy and ICT Skills for Life (3638, 3792 and 3804) centres operating in Wales received **automatic qualification approval** for ESW.

5.4 How has City & Guilds handled the transition arrangements?

City & Guilds has given to all candidates registered and still working towards a Key Skills or Entry level basic skills qualification on 31 August 2010 an automatic free registration for 3768. This enables them to switch painlessly to the new qualification, though they still have the option of remaining on the old qualification if they prefer (as long as it is certificated by 31 August 2011).

Note centres in Wales are no longer allowed to access the Level 1-2 Adult Numeracy/Literacy multiple choice tests (either on GOLA or paper-based), nor the Entry 3 Adult Numeracy GOLA test. Re-registration for these candidates is **not** automatic; they will need to register for 3768 if they have not already passed the test.

5.5 How does City & Guilds assess Entry level?

Entry level is assessed by a summative 'one-off' activity completed in a classroom- environment. It consists of a series of related tasks around a given theme, each with a clear purpose.

* CBI Education and Skills Survey



We're developing a bank of pre-approved assignments that can be used 'off the shelf', although centres are also be able to write their own (subject to approval). Sample Entry level assignments are also available to download from www.cityandguilds.com/esw.



5.6 What fees does City & Guilds charge for ESW?

We're offering a choice of pricing routes (all of which include free access to the wider Key Skills –see **6, Future of the wider Key Skills**). Our fees for 2010-11 are:

3768-01 (all-inclusive route)

Registration (includes all three ESW quals at all six levels, plus the three wider Key Skills at four levels):	£25.00
Results entry (per essential or wider key skill):	£0.00

3768-02, 3768-03 and 3768-04 ('Pay As You Go' route)

Registration (per essential skill, including access to all six levels, plus the three wider Key Skills at four levels):	£5.00
Results entry (per essential skill):	£4.00
Results entry (per wider key skill):	£0.00

3638-21 (wider Key Skills only, with **no** ESW)

Registration (including access to all three wider Key Skills at four levels):	£0.00
Results entry (per wider key skill):	£6.00

For more detailed information contact your local City & Guilds Business Manager.

5.7 Why isn't City & Guilds offering ESW at Level 4?

The number of candidates previously accessing the Level 4 Key Skills qualifications (typically less than a dozen a year across the whole UK) suggests there isn't enough interest in the Level 4 ESW qualifications to make them viable. We would encourage ESW practitioners and others to familiarise themselves with the Level 4 ESW standards, although this need not involve actually working towards the Level 4 qualifications.

6 Future of the wider Key Skills

6.1 What's happened to the wider Key Skills?

The wider Key Skills have extended until 31 August 2012. DCELLS is currently leading on the revision of these standards and a replacement set of qualifications will be available from September 2012. The revised standards/qualifications and associated support materials will align with and be accredited as part of the ESW suite of qualifications.

6.2 Why is there a new City & Guilds qualification number for the wider Key Skills?

Because the 'first three' Key Skills qualifications are not continuing, the two existing qualification numbers used by City & Guilds Key Skills centres in Wales (3638-12 and 3638-13) had to close to new registrations on 31 August 2010.

Candidates intending to access any of the wider Key Skills who have **already** been registered will be able to continue under these qualification numbers as long as they are certificated by 31 August 2011. **All ESW candidates will also have automatic free access to the wider Key Skills.**

However, any candidates who **only** want to register the wider Key Skills after 1 September 2010 (without doing any ESW qualifications) will need to use a different qualification number – 3638-21. Registrations under this route will be free of charge, although there will be a charge for portfolio results claims.



7 Apprenticeships, Welsh Bac and other programmes



7.1 How does the discontinuation of Key Skills and implementation of ESW affect Modern Apprenticeships, Welsh Bac, etc?

It does not have any effect on Modern Apprenticeships or the Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification (WBQ) as the ESW qualifications are straight replacements for the Key Skills of Communication, Application of Number and ICT. Where these Key Skills qualifications have previously been specified, the equivalent ESW qualification is accepted instead.

The wider Key Skills will continue as qualifications until 2012 (see **6, Future of the wider Key Skills**).

7.2 Will the Key Skills requirements for Welsh Bac change?

No – the ESW qualifications are a direct replacement for the ‘first three’ Key Skills qualifications. The WBQ Core Programme will in future require the three ESW qualifications, plus the three wider Key Skills.

7.3 Do SSCs/SSBs accept ESW as part of their apprenticeship frameworks?

The policy in Wales is that ESW replaces the ‘first three’ Key Skills qualifications. All Sector Skills Councils and Standards Setting Bodies have been required to comply with this policy by DCELLS.

7.4 Will the ‘Relaxation Rule’ still apply within Modern Apprenticeships?

Just to clarify what we’re referring to here, the 2001 ‘Relaxation Ruling’ exempted learners on Foundation Modern Apprenticeship (FMA) and Modern Apprenticeship (MA) programmes from **needing** Key Skills qualifications for framework completion where they already hold A*-C GCSEs or A/AS Levels in English/Mathematics (as applicable). Relaxation is often confused with the (separate) proxy exemption arrangements for candidates who **are** working towards Key Skills qualifications.

The ‘blueprint’ for FMAs and MAs in Wales is due to be replaced in 2011 by a new statutory Specification of Apprenticeship Standards for Wales (SASW). There might be a re-appraisal of these arrangements as part of those changes, although for the moment Relaxation continues to apply.

7.5 Will learners from England with Functional Skills qualifications have to do ESW if they move to Wales?

It depends what sort of programme they are on, but certainly where there is a formal requirement to achieve ESW (eg for FMAs, MAs and the WBQ) any Functional Skills qualifications they already hold cannot be used to ‘proxy’ for ESW. They will need to complete any required ESW qualifications, though if they are already operating at the level they should find it relatively easy to produce the necessary evidence.