



Department
for Education

Literacy and numeracy qualification requirements for level 3 Early Years Educator staff

Government consultation response

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Ministerial Foreword

We all know that children's experiences in early years are hugely formative in so many ways. Good quality early learning is extremely important in setting children on a successful path in life and getting them ready for school.

I am always struck by the passion and entrepreneurialism in this sector. Every day, nursery workers, early years teachers and childminders are helping children learn, develop and flourish – deftly placing the building blocks for unlocking their talents in adult life. We want to support that passion and that enterprise.

The evidence is clear that a high quality workforce has a significant impact on the quality of early years provision and outcomes for children. I want to ensure that early years providers are able to recruit and retain people who have a passion for working with young children and the right skills and knowledge to support children's development at this crucial time in their lives.

I asked for this consultation because I wanted to hear views and make sure that we get changes right – because by working together we can deliver the high quality, affordable childcare and early education which families across the country really need.

The consultation responses show the sector agrees that numeracy and literacy skills are important for those working with young children, their parents and other professionals. We received an overwhelming response, with over 4,000 written responses. Indeed, they show that many in the sector welcome the ambition of the GCSE requirement. However, they also confirm that employers and training providers are experiencing difficulties with their recruitment at level 3. This is because the qualification requirements are not broad enough to enable them to attract, retain and develop people with the right skills and passion for this rewarding profession.

After careful consideration, I have decided to broaden the qualifications in English and mathematics which can be achieved by early years educators (level 3) to count in the staff: child ratios. This means that level 2 functional skills will be accepted alongside other suitable level 2 qualifications including GCSEs.

Based on the feedback to our consultation, I believe that this will strike the right balance between a system that supports people to reach their potential, but also ensures that they have the right skills to support children's development at this crucial time in their lives.

CAROLINE DINENAGE MP

Parliamentary under Secretary of State for Women, Equalities and Early Years

Introduction

The [early years foundation stage](#) (EYFS) statutory framework sets out the standards that schools and childcare providers must meet for the learning, development and care of children under the age of five. Section 3 of the EYFS sets out the welfare and safeguarding requirements including staff: child ratios and the qualifications that staff must hold to operate within the ratios. The welfare and safeguarding requirements underpin the welfare requirements set out in primary legislation through the Childcare Act 2006.

The requirement for staff to hold a level 3 early years educator (EYE) qualification and GCSEs came into force on 1 September 2014 and was not applied retrospectively.

During the past year we have heard from employers and training providers who have told us that they are experiencing difficulty in recruiting level 3 staff because there are too few candidates with the required GCSEs. They have also advised that recruiting and retaining level 2 staff has become more challenging because the GCSE requirement is discouraging people from entering the sector and preventing those already working in settings from progressing. It was suggested that it would be appropriate to broaden the literacy and numeracy qualifications requirements to include functional skills and that this would support the sector in recruiting and retaining appropriately qualified staff.

The consultation ran from 5 to 28 November 2016 and received 4,072 responses from the early years sector (including employers, managers of nurseries and other pre-school settings, teachers and early years practitioners), as well as other key stakeholders including training providers and local authorities.

This consultation response summarises the responses received and the actions we will take as a result.

Summary

1. The consultation was an opportunity to better understand the impact of the current GCSE requirement on the early years workforce and the quality of provision. It received 4,072 responses from the early years sector and workforce.
2. Just over three-quarters of respondents (76.8%) stated that they had experienced difficulty recruiting to their setting or training course in the last two years. Just over half (52.9%) said they had experienced significant difficulties that had affected their organisation and a further quarter (23.9%) stated that the difficulties had had limited impact. One in ten (10.5%) had not experienced recruitment difficulties.
3. Almost two thirds of respondents (64.9%) stated that applicants' lack of the required GCSEs was their main recruitment difficulty.
4. Half of respondents (50.2%) selected level 2 functional skills as the 'most appropriate' literacy qualification. Just over a quarter of respondents (28.0%) stated that a bespoke qualification should be developed, and almost a fifth (18.7%) that GCSE grade C or above was the most appropriate. As a proportion, more respondents from nursery schools attached to a primary or infants' school and local authorities selected the GCSE option than the other types of respondent.
5. Responses regarding appropriate mathematics qualifications followed a similar pattern to those for English. Support for functional skills was 53.8% and for a bespoke qualification 32.3%. However, there was less support for the mathematics GCSE at 11.4%.
6. Half of respondents thought that the relevant literacy and numeracy qualifications should be gained 'On entry to early years training' (51.3%) and a fifth (20.9%) chose 'On entry to work in an early year setting'.
7. There was little data to suggest that the GCSE requirement has had a beneficial impact on the quality of childcare applicants or childcare - a very small percentage of respondents (4.4%) stated that the requirement has led to an increase in the quality of applicants.
8. The skills identified by respondents as being most necessary can be covered by level 2 functional skills qualifications along with requirements already included in the EYE qualifications criteria as shown in Annex A.
9. As a result of these findings, the current minimum requirement for level 3 EYEs to hold GCSEs in English and mathematics to count in staff: child ratios as set out in the EYFS has been broadened to include other suitable level 2 qualifications, including functional skills, with effect from 3 April 2017.

Consultation Respondents

10. The consultation received 4,072 responses from the early years sector and workforce.

11. The table below provides a breakdown of respondents by respondent type. The largest single respondent type was training provider (880 respondents, 21.6%). There were also more than 600 responses from each of the following respondent types: single site day nurseries; day nurseries that are part of a small chain; and playgroups or preschools.

Respondent type	Number of responses	Percent of responses
Training Provider ¹	880	21.6%
Day nursery - single site	664	16.3%
Day nursery - small chain ²	624	15.3%
Playgroup or preschool	614	15.1%
Other	314	7.7%
Day nursery - large chain ³	223	5.5%
Nursery school	196	4.8%
Childminder	175	4.3%
Nursery school attached to a primary or infant's school	131	3.2%
Local authority	125	3.1%
Parent	47	1.2%
Sector representative organisation	44	1.1%
Breakfast or after school club	35	0.9%
Total	4,072	

¹ Training Providers deliver early years training and qualification assessment to post-16 learners and apprentices

² Small chain: 2 – 5 early years settings

³ Large chain: 5 or more early years settings

12. The table below shows the breakdown of respondents by English region. The greatest number of respondents were from the South East (1,108 respondents, 27.2%).

Respondent by English Region	Number of responses	Percent of responses
South East	1,108	27.2%
South West	528	13.0%
North West	507	12.5%
London	454	11.1%
West Midlands	410	10.1%
East Midlands	307	7.5%
East of England	275	6.8%
Yorkshire and the Humber	267	6.6%
National	124	3.0%
North East	92	2.3%
Total	4,072	

Analysis of consultation responses

13. The consultation was an opportunity to better understand the impact of the current GCSE requirement on the early years workforce, and the quality of provision. It aimed to inform a government decision on whether the requirement should be adjusted to ensure that people with the knowledge, skills and appropriate qualifications to perform a level 3 role can enter the sector, whilst also putting them in the best position from which to progress through their careers.
14. In the remainder of this report the consultation questions we asked are presented followed by analysis of what you told us in response. This analysis includes written commentary and a table of responses. Our conclusion is then presented in the We asked, You said, We did, We will format.

Question 1: What English knowledge and skills do staff need to perform at level 3 early years educator level?

15. Seven of the English knowledge and skills presented were identified as necessary for staff to perform at EYE level 3 by over 80% of respondents. Of these, three of the presented English knowledge and skills were identified as necessary by over 90% of respondents. As follows:
16. The options considered to be needed at level 3 by more than 90% of respondents were:
 - A range of speaking and listening skills to develop relationships with children, parents and other professionals
 - Being able to communicate effectively, verbally and in writing, with parents and other professionals
 - Confidence in understanding the literacy requirements in the EYFS and how to impart them to young learners (creating and thinking critically, listening and attention, understanding, speaking, reading and writing)
17. The further options considered to be needed at level 3 by more than 80% of respondents were:
 - An appreciation of the importance of reading in supporting own development and that of young children
 - Being able to comprehend written material
 - Being able to write meaningful documentation with good spelling and grammar
 - Independent thinking and working

18. Analysis of responses by type of respondent did not show any meaningful variation in responses.
19. Two hundred and seventy-five respondents chose to give more details about their answer. Thirty-three respondents restated one of the presented options and 68 were not applicable. The skills and knowledge stated by other respondents included; ability to use practical methods to support language/literacy development (35); and basic English language skills (33).

Response Options	Number selecting each option (n = 4,062)⁴	Percent selecting each option
A range of speaking and listening skills to develop relationships with children, parents and other professionals	3,888	95.7%
Being able to communicate effectively, verbally and in writing, with parents and other professionals	3,857	95.0%
Confidence in understanding the literacy requirements in the EYFS and how to impart them to young learners	3,798	93.5%
An appreciation of the importance of reading in supporting own development and that of young children	3,464	85.3%
Being able to comprehend written material	3,427	84.4%
Being able to write meaningful documentation with good spelling and grammar	3,422	84.2%
Independent thinking and working	3,272	80.6%
Ability to select/adapt speech/writing to different situations and audiences	2,789	68.7%
An understanding of how to experiment with and use language creatively	2,687	66.1%

Question 2: What mathematical knowledge and skills do staff need to perform at level 3 early years educator level?

20. Six of the nine mathematics/numeracy knowledge and skills presented were identified as necessary for staff to perform at level 3 EYE level by more than 70% of respondents. Of these, three were identified as necessary by over 85% of respondents.
21. The options considered to be needed at level 3 by more than 85% of respondents were:
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⁴ Respondents could choose more than one option

- Confidence in understanding the numeracy requirements in the EYFS and how to impart them to young learners
- Ability to identify opportunities for children to develop and improve their skills in counting, understanding and using numbers, calculating simple addition and subtraction problems; and to describe shapes, spaces, and measures
- Understanding how to use everyday mathematical vocabulary to talk about size, weight, capacity, position, distance, time and money to compare quantities and objects and to solve problems, using mathematical language to describe them

22. The further options considered to be needed at level 3 by more than 70% of respondents were:

- Confidence in understanding mathematical terms and concepts relevant to the job role and how to apply them in an early years setting
- The ability to apply mathematical knowledge successfully to different contexts including every day and real world situations
- Independent thinking and working

23. Analysis of responses by type of respondent did not show any meaningful variation in responses.

24. Two hundred and seventy-six respondents provided more detail. Of these 72 responses were not applicable. The required skills and knowledge as stated by other respondents included; basic numerical/mathematics skills/ability (51); ability to practically support children's mathematics/numeracy development (51); skills/knowledge needed depend on the specific role of the staff member (47) and functional skills (37).

Response Options	Number selecting each option (n= 4,061) ⁵	Percent selecting each option
Confidence in understanding the numeracy requirements in the EYFS and how to impart them to young learners (numbers, space, shape and measures)	3,861	95.1%
Ability to identify opportunities for children to develop and improve their skills in counting, understanding and using numbers, calculating simple addition and subtraction problems; and to describe shapes, spaces, and measures	3,722	91.7%
Understanding how to use everyday mathematical vocabulary to talk about size, weight, capacity, position, distance, time and money to compare quantities and objects and to solve problems, using mathematical language to describe them	3,523	86.8%
Confidence in understanding mathematical terms and concepts relevant to the job role and how to apply them in an early years setting e.g. simple concepts such as addition, subtraction and percentages and skills required to manage a budget	3,113	76.7%
The ability to apply mathematical knowledge successfully to different contexts including every day and real world situations	2,974	73.2%
Independent thinking and working	2,970	73.1%
Developed problem solving skills	2,628	64.7%
Ability to present numerical information appropriately and to interpret numerical information e.g. review performance data or budget information	1,587	39.1%

Question 3: In the last two years, have you experienced difficulty in recruiting people to work in your setting/attend your training course?

25. Three-quarters of respondents (76.8%, 3,061 respondents) stated that they had experienced difficulty recruiting to their setting or training course in the last two years. Just over half (52.9%, 2,110 respondents) said they had experienced significant

⁵ Respondents could choose more than one option

difficulties that had affected their organisation and a further quarter (23.9%, 951 respondents) stated that the difficulties had had limited impact.

26. One in ten respondents (10.5%, 418 respondents) indicated they had not experienced recruiting difficulties.

27. Five hundred and sixty-one respondents provided more detail although 432 of these comments were not applicable. The remaining responses did not provide meaningful quantitative data.

Response Options	Number selecting each option (n = 3,985)⁶	Percent selecting each option
Yes, significant difficulties which have impacted my organisation	2,110	52.9%
Yes, some difficulties but with limited impact on my organisation	951	23.9%
No difficulties in recruiting	418	10.5%

28. Analysis by respondent type shows that larger percentages of training providers and day nurseries (individual, small and large chain) than any other respondent types stated that they had experienced significant recruitment difficulties.

⁶ Responses do not sum to the base figure as 'other' comments have been analysed separately

Question 4: If you experienced difficulties with recruitment, what was the nature of the main difficulty you experienced in recruiting people to work in your setting/attend your training course?

29. Applicants' lack of the required GCSEs was the main recruitment difficulty, reported by two-thirds of respondents (64.9%, 2,313). The next most frequently selected difficulty, mentioned by just over a third of respondents (36.3%, 1,294) was not enough people applying for jobs.

30. Four hundred and ten respondents provided more details. Of these, 257 responses were not applicable. Seventy respondents indicated that the GCSE requirement had been a general barrier to recruitment. Small numbers of 'other' responses related to settings' inability to pay a high enough wage to attract suitable applicants (21 responses) or applicants' lack of the required interpersonal/generic skills (9 responses).

Response Options	Number selecting each option (n = 3,566) ⁷	Percent selecting each option
Applicants who applied did not have required GCSEs	2,313	64.9%
Not enough applicants applying for job roles	1,294	36.3%
Applicants who applied did not have relevant childcare qualification	1,055	29.6%
Applicants who applied or were interviewed did not have suitable knowledge or skills	785	22.0%

31. Analysis by respondent type showed that all respondents except breakfast/afterschool clubs and childminders⁸ reported that applicants' lack of the required GCSEs was the main recruitment difficulty they had experienced. Greater proportions of training providers and day nurseries than other respondent types stated that their main recruitment difficulty was applicants' lack of the required GCSEs.

⁷ Respondents could choose more than one option

⁸ Childminders, breakfast and afterschool clubs, and holiday provision for children who normally attend reception class (or older) during the school day, are not required to abide by the qualifications requirements of the EYFS

Question 5: If you experienced difficulties with recruitment please provide relevant information or evidence on how this has impacted on your setting/training organisation.

32. This was a free text question with no options presented. Although 3,061 respondents stated that they had experienced difficulty in recruiting in their response to Question 3, only 2,435 respondents provided further details of the impact of recruitment difficulties on their setting/training organisation.

33. The question asked for 'information or evidence' about how difficulties with recruitment had impacted on their setting/organisation, however, many respondents instead used this question to discuss their recruitment issues in general terms, or their views on the GCSE requirement. A fifth (489) of responses to this question were not applicable.

Responses	Number of responses (n = 2,435) ⁹	Percentage of responses
Difficulty in recruiting staff (reported by settings)	783	32.2%
Difficulties with staff progression (reported by settings)	336	13.8%
Workload and staffing issues for setting	307	12.6%
Impact for settings childcare quality	209	8.6%
Reduction in numbers of learners (reported by training providers)	202	8.3%
Impact on settings capacity/expansion	190	7.8%
Difficulties with staff/learner progression (reported by training providers)	175	7.2%
Difficulty in recruiting learners (reported by training providers)	168	6.9%
Increased financial cost for setting	156	6.4%
Difficulty in retaining staff (reported by settings)	105	4.3%
Difficulty in retaining learners (reported by training providers)	34	1.4%

⁹ Responses could be coded against more than one theme

34. The most commonly stated theme was settings' difficulties recruiting staff (32.2%, 783 respondents).
35. Settings also mentioned a range of ways in which recruitment difficulties had negatively affected childcare quality. These included:
- Problems maintaining the required ratios.
 - Recruitment of staff who would not normally have been considered to have sufficient skills or experience.
 - Over-reliance on agency staff, with implications for continuity of children's care.
 - Overall reductions in the level of skill/ability across the staff team.
36. A small number of settings and training providers (66) provided more detailed information about the impact of their recruitment difficulties. For example:
- "80% reduction in applicants."
 - "My level 3 classes plummeted from 24 to 9 and this year 14."
 - "Not been able to recruit staff to allow us to stay in ratio. We had to spend over £8000 for agency staff (invoices available to view) for just a few weeks."
 - "Have had to use agency staff who on average charge £14 per hour. Our setting has been doing this now on average for 35 hours for the past 6 months."
 - "Impacted on the number of learners who have been able to progress from level 2 to level 3. With a drop of over 50% in the number of learners taking the level 3 qualification."

Question 6: In 2014 we introduced the requirement for level 3 staff to hold GCSEs in English and mathematics at grade C or above. Has this had an impact on recruiting people to work in your setting/attend your training course?

37. Responses suggest that, for the majority of respondents, the GCSE requirement has been a barrier to recruitment. The most frequently chosen responses were that the GCSE requirement has led to a reduction in the number of applicants (38.5%, 1,494 respondents) and that the requirement has led to the setting/organisation rejecting otherwise suitable candidates (37.8%, 1,465 respondents).
38. One in ten respondents (9.3%, 362 respondents) stated that the introduction of the requirement has had 'no impact', and one in twenty (4.4%, 169 respondents) stated that the requirement has led to an increase in the quality of applicants.
39. Whilst 466 provided more detail, the majority (336 responses) were not applicable.

Response Options	Number selecting each option (n = 3,876) ¹⁰	Percent selecting each option
Yes, it has reduced the number of applicants	1,494	38.5%
Yes, my organisation has had to reject applicants who we thought were otherwise suitable	1,465	37.8%
No impact	362	9.3%
Yes, it has led to increasing quality in applicants	169	4.4%

Question 7: Which of the following has your organisation experienced over the last year?

40. The majority of respondents had rejected an otherwise suitable applicant because they did not have mathematics GCSE grade C (66.5%, 2,324 respondents) or English GCSE grade C (60.9%, 2,130 respondents).

41. Five hundred and seventy-eight respondents provided more detail about their answer. Of these, the majority (355 responses) were not applicable. Eighty respondents said they had experienced a lack of staff progression because of the GCSE requirement.

Response Options	Number selecting each option (n = 3,496) ¹¹	Percent selecting each option
Rejecting an otherwise suitable applicant because they did not have mathematics GCSE grade C	2,324	66.5%
Rejecting an otherwise suitable applicant because they did not have English GCSE grade C	2,130	60.9%
Additional costs in preparing and entering people for GCSE exams	1,136	32.5%
Delays in recruiting an applicant due to the GCSE assessment timetable	926	26.5%

¹⁰ Responses do not sum to the base figure as 'other' comments have been analysed separately

¹¹ Respondents could choose more than one option

Question 8: What numeracy and literacy qualification requirements at level 3 would encourage level 2 staff who are already in the sector to progress to level 3?

42. Of the answer options presented ‘A qualification that is seen as development and that clearly relates to, and supports, the level 3 practitioner role’, was by far the most popular selection with more than half of respondents selecting it (58.3%, 2,318 respondents).
43. Three hundred and twenty-two respondents provided further details, of which 84 responses were not applicable. Functional skills were mentioned by 113 respondents. In addition, 28 respondents stated that there should be a bespoke mathematics and/or English competency or skills test, and 25 stated that there should be no literacy or numeracy requirement at all.

Response Options	Number selecting each option (n = 3,976) ¹²	Percent selecting each option
Qualification that is seen as development and that clearly relates to, and supports, the level 3 practitioner role	2,318	58.3%
Clear progression from level 2 requirements to level 3	840	21.1%
The qualifications gained to be transferrable both within and outside of the sector	538	13.5%

Question 9: What support can be put in place for those already in the sector to progress from level 2 to level 3?

44. Of the answer options presented ‘A qualification that builds on the experience already gained by a level 2 practitioner’, was the most popular option chosen by two thirds of respondents (65.5%, 2,620 respondents).
45. A fifth of respondents (20.9%, 836) chose ‘A qualification that does not require a significant time commitment alongside work’, echoing a theme that was reflected in a number of the additional comments that respondents made to different consultation questions.

¹² Responses do not sum to the base figure as ‘other’ comments have been analysed separately

46. Two hundred and fifty-eight respondents provided more details, of which 47 responses were not applicable. By far the most frequently mentioned issue was functional skills (69 respondents).

Response Options	Number selecting each option (n = 3,997) ¹³	Percent selecting each option
A qualification that builds on the experience already gained by a level 2 practitioner	2,620	65.5%
A qualification that does not require a significant time commitment alongside work	836	20.9%
Multiple exam points during the year, allowing resits to take place	329	8.2%

Question 10: What literacy qualification requirements at level 2 do you think are most appropriate for level 3 staff?

47. Half of respondents selected functional skills English level 2 as the 'most appropriate' qualification (50.2%, 2,033 respondents).

48. Just over a quarter of respondents (28.0%, 1,132 respondents) stated that a bespoke qualification should be developed, and approximately a fifth (18.7%, 757 respondents) stated that GCSE grade C or above was the most appropriate qualification requirement.

49. There were 182 further comments in relation to this question, with the most popular referring to functional skills, accounting for 34 responses. In addition, 23 respondents stated that there should not be any literacy qualification requirement.

¹³ Responses do not sum to the base figure as 'other' comments have been analysed separately

Response Options	Number selecting each option (n = 4,049) ¹⁴	Percent selecting each option
Functional skills English level 2	2,033	50.2%
No suitable qualification currently exists, developing a bespoke qualification on effective practice to engage young children in literacy learning would be most appropriate for this role	1,132	28.0%
GCSE grade C or above in English	757	18.7%

50. Analysis by respondent type shows most respondent types favoured functional skills English level 2. The exception was nursery schools attached to a primary or infants' school which favoured GCSEs. A third of local authorities favoured functional skills and a third favoured GCSEs.

Question 11: What numeracy qualification requirements at level 2 do you think are most appropriate for level 3 staff?

51. Responses to this question followed a broadly similar pattern to those for the literacy requirement. However, there were generally lower levels of agreement that the GCSE is most appropriate with just over one in ten selecting this option (11.4%, 459 respondents). Support for functional skills came from over half (53.8%, 2,169 respondents). A third (32.3%, 1,302 respondents) stated that a bespoke qualification was needed.

52. Of the 166 respondents who provided comments, 48 were re-statements of one or more of the options that had been presented and 32 related to functional skills level 1.

Response Options	Number selecting each option (n = 4,032) ¹⁵	Percent selecting each option
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¹⁴ Responses do not sum to the base figure as 'other' comments have been analysed separately

¹⁵ Responses do not sum to the base figure as 'other' comments have been analysed separately

Response Options	Number selecting each option (n = 4,032) ¹⁵	Percent selecting each option
Functional skills mathematics level 2	2,169	53.8%
No suitable qualification currently exists, developing a bespoke qualification on effective practice to engage young children in numeracy learning would be most appropriate for this role	1,302	32.3%
GCSE grade C or above in mathematics	459	11.4%

53. Analysis by respondent type shows that functional skills mathematics level 2 was thought to be the most appropriate qualification requirement across respondent types, particularly by training providers. The exception were respondents from nursery schools attached to a primary or infants' school and local authorities who favoured GCSEs.

Question 12: At what stage should the relevant literacy and numeracy qualifications be gained?

54. Just over half of respondents thought that the relevant literacy and numeracy requirements should be gained 'On entry to early years training' (51.3%, 2,028 respondents). A fifth of respondents (20.9%, 826 respondents) chose 'On entry to work in an early years setting'. Over a quarter (27.8%, 1,097 respondents) selected the 'Other e.g. after a post qualifying year while in paid employment' option.

55. Of the 657 respondents providing further detail, 205 commented along the lines that the relevant literacy and numeracy qualifications should be studied alongside the level 3 qualification. In addition, 125 respondents stated that the relevant literacy and numeracy qualifications should be gained at some unspecified time during early years training.

Response Options	Number selecting each option (n = 3,951)¹⁶	Percent selecting each option
On entry to early years training	2,028	51.3%
Other e.g. after a post qualifying year while in paid employment	1,097	27.8%
On entry to work in an early years setting	826	20.9%

¹⁶ Responses do not sum to the base figure as 'other' comments have been analysed separately

Next steps

We asked

56. The aim of the consultation on the literacy & numeracy requirements for level 3 EYE staff was to:

- Better understand the impact of the current GCSE requirement on the early years workforce and the quality of provision.
- Inform a government decision on the appropriate English and mathematics qualification requirements for level 3 EYE staff working in the sector.

You said

57. A large number of stakeholders (4,072) responded to the consultation and it provided a range of useful information to inform a government decision about whether the GCSE requirement should be adjusted.

58. Findings indicate that the majority of respondents have experienced recruitment difficulties since the introduction of the GCSE requirement, with training providers and day nurseries, in particular, experiencing significant difficulties that have impacted on their organisations. The majority of respondents stated that a lack of the required GCSEs was the key recruitment difficulty they faced.

59. Many respondents used the consultation as an opportunity to give their general views on the GCSE requirement, and it was clear from responses that GCSE mathematics and English are not viewed as the only qualification that provide staff with the necessary knowledge and skills to work with young children. There was consensus about the types of English and mathematics knowledge and skills needed for a level 3 job role. Functional skills level 2 in mathematics and English were the numeracy and literacy qualifications viewed by most respondents as appropriate for level 3 staff. Support for these qualifications far exceeded that for GCSE mathematics and English.

60. There was little data to suggest that the GCSE requirement has had a beneficial impact on the quality of childcare applicants or childcare - a very small percentage of respondents (4.4%) stated that the requirement has led to an increase in the quality of applicants.

61. The skills identified by respondents as being most necessary can be covered by level 2 functional skills qualifications along with the requirements already included in the EYE qualifications criteria, as detailed in Annex A.

We did

The current requirement for level 3 EYEs to also hold GCSEs in English and mathematics Grade A*- C to count in staff:child ratios as set out in the EYFS has been broadened to include other suitable level 2 qualifications, including functional skills, (see Annex B) with effect from 3 April 2017.

The requirement sets the minimum qualification requirements. Employers are free to set their own specific requirements for recruitment of staff. We have not removed GCSEs from the list of suitable qualifications as some employers and training providers may wish to continue to apply them to recruitment.

62. The [EYFS](#) Statutory Framework has been amended to state that to count in the staff ratios at level 3, staff holding an EYE qualification must also have achieved a suitable level 2 qualification in English and mathematics.
63. The Department for Education (DfE) is responsible for defining the level 2 qualifications that are suitable. These are listed in Annex B and on the [Early Years Qualifications List](#).
64. This change means that practitioners who started their EYE qualification from 1 September 2014 need to hold suitable level 2 English and mathematics qualifications to count in the staff:child ratios at level 3.

The current requirement to hold the relevant literacy and numeracy qualifications on 'entry to employment' has been retained, as government does not set the entry requirements for early years training courses. Training providers are able to set their own entry requirements, and determine who they feel they can support to achieve a level 3 qualification and the necessary numeracy and literacy requirements to perform an EYE role.

65. This approach is consistent with the development of new apprenticeship standards, which require apprentices working towards a level 3 apprenticeship or above to have achieved level 2 qualifications in English and mathematics prior to taking their end point assessment and becoming fully competent.
66. Setting the requirement on entry to employment rather than on entry to training also provides greater flexibility for employers to recruit staff who may already hold their

EYE qualification but who have not yet achieved suitable literacy and numeracy qualifications. These staff can operate under level 2 staff:child ratios until they achieve their qualifications.

67. For standalone EYE qualifications, training providers can either require English and mathematics qualifications on entry to their training programme, incorporate them into a programme of study or encourage learners to study for them alongside their early years qualification.
68. A learner can also choose to complete level 2 English and mathematics qualifications prior to undertaking a level 3 early years training course. This approach gives learners greater flexibility than is currently possible under the GCSE only requirement. This is particularly beneficial for staff in the sector who may need to balance their study with family or caring commitments. Functional skills also offer more flexibility in relation to assessment, as training providers and learners will not be limited to exam windows and assessments can be timed to fit into the learners training programme more effectively.

Work with the sector to enable bespoke level 2 early years literacy and numeracy qualifications, which are developed by the sector and awarding organisations, to be included in the list of accepted qualifications.

We will

Annex A: English and mathematical skills and knowledge – derivation from GCSEs and functional skills

English Criteria

Response Options	Derived From	Percentage of Respondents
A range of speaking and listening skills to develop relationships with children, parents and other professionals	Functional skills	95.7%
Being able to communicate effectively, verbally and in writing, with parents and other professionals	Functional skills	95.0%
Confidence in understanding the literacy requirements in the EYFS and how to impart them to young learners	Covered in EYE qualifications (see extract below*)	93.5%
An appreciation of the importance of reading in supporting own development and that of young children	Functional skills	85.3%
Being able to comprehend written material	Functional skills	84.4%
Being able to write meaningful documentation with good spelling and grammar	Functional skills	84.2%
Independent thinking and working	Functional skills and GCSE	80.6%
Ability to select/adapt speech/writing to different situations and audiences	Functional skills and GCSE	68.7%
An understanding of how to experiment with and use language creatively	GCSE	66.1%

Mathematics Criteria

Response Options	Derived From	Percentage of Respondents
Confidence in understanding the numeracy requirements in the EYFS and how to impart them to young learners (numbers, space, shape and measures)	Covered in EYE qualifications (see extract below*)	95.1%
Ability to identify opportunities for children to develop and improve their skills in counting, understanding and using numbers, calculating simple addition and subtraction problems; and to describe shapes, spaces, and measures	Functional skills and covered in EYE qualifications (see extract below*)	91.7%
Understanding how to use everyday mathematical vocabulary to talk about size, weight, capacity, position, distance, time and money to compare quantities and objects and to solve problems, using mathematical language to describe them	Functional skills	86.8%
Confidence in understanding mathematical terms and concepts relevant to the job role and how to apply them in an early years setting e.g. simple concepts such as addition, subtraction and percentages and skills required to manage a budget	Functional skills	76.7%
The ability to apply mathematical knowledge successfully to different contexts including every day and real world situations	Functional skills	73.2%
Independent thinking and working	Functional skills and GCSE	73.1%
Developed problem solving skills	Functional skills and GCSE	64.7%
Ability to present numerical information appropriately and to interpret numerical information e.g. review performance data or budget information	Functional skills	39.1%

*Extract from [Early Years Educator Criteria \(July 2013\)](#)

2.1 Plan and lead activities, purposeful play opportunities and educational programmes which include the learning and development areas of [current early education curriculum requirements](#). To include:

- Communication and language (extending vocabulary, language structure, and dialogue, for example)
- Physical development

- Personal, social and emotional development
- Literacy
- Mathematics
- Understanding the world
- Expressive arts and design

2.6 Support and promote children's speech, language and communication development.

Annex B: Suitable level 2 literacy & numeracy qualifications to enable early years educator staff to count in the level 3 staff:child ratios

English

- a Functional Skills qualification in English at Level 2
- a GCSE/International GCSE qualification in English Language and/or Literature to at least grade C (grade 4).
- a Key Skills qualification in Literacy at Level 2
- an A' Level or AS Level qualification in English Language and/or English Literature to at least grade E
- an O' Level qualification in English to at least grade C.
- CSE grade 1 English (Language)

Also Recognised Scottish, Northern Irish and Welsh equivalents.

Mathematics

- a Functional Skills qualification in Mathematics at Level 2
- a GCSE/International GCSE qualification in Mathematics to at least grade C (grade 4)
- a Key Skills qualification in Application of Number at Level 2
- an A' Level or AS Level qualification in Mathematics or Pure Mathematics and/or Further Mathematics to at least grade E
- an O' Level qualification in Mathematics to at least grade C.
- CSE grade 1 Mathematics

Also Recognised Scottish, Northern Irish and Welsh equivalents.



Department
for Education

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