Department for Education

Digital Functional Skills qualifications: subject content

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Contents

Introduction

This document sets out the purpose, learning aims and outcomes, and subject content common to digital Functional Skills qualifications (FSQs) at Entry Level and Level 1.

It provides the framework within which awarding organisations create the detail of their specifications. Digital FSQ specifications must use the subject content listed for each level and reflect the learning aims and outcomes set out at each level.

The subject content for digital FSQs reflects the skills set out in the national standards for essential digital skills[1].

In interpreting the content, awarding organisations should note that the content at Level 1 subsumes and builds upon the content at Entry Level where relevant.

[1] https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/796596/National_standards_for_essential_digital_skills.pdf

Purpose

Digital FSQs should fulfil the following purposes:

- provide reliable evidence of a student's achievements against content that is relevant to the workplace and real life;
- provide assessment of a student's knowledge and skills as well as their ability to apply these in different contexts; and
- provide a foundation for progression into employment or further education and develop skills for everyday life.

Some Entry Level students with little or no prior experience of using digital devices or the internet may need support to handle and use digital devices, such as turning on a device and using a mouse or keyboard, before progressing on to the knowledge and skills set out in the subject content.

Students at Entry Level and Level 1 are expected to be able to demonstrate the knowledge and skills set out in the subject content as part of completing tasks and activities.

At both levels, tasks and activities should be authentic and relevant to today's workplace and everyday life. These tasks and activities should require students to make connections between the skills areas set out in the content, therefore awarding organisation specifications should encourage teachers to emphasise the interconnectedness of these skills areas – for example, that being safe and responsible online is a consideration across all the other skills areas – and to consider the use of online delivery.

Progression between the levels should be evident in terms of:

- the complexity of the tasks and activities, and any related information;
- the number of stages within tasks and activities; and
- the extent to which the requirement(s) is set out for, or has to be determined by, the learner.

Learning aims and outcomes at Entry Level

Digital FSQs will enable students to initiate and participate in digital and online activities safely in the workplace and other real-life contexts. At this level, digital FSQs should:

- enable students to gain confidence and fluency in their use of digital knowledge and skills, and develop a positive attitude towards the use of digital skills;
- enable students to develop an appreciation of the importance of digital skills in the workplace and in life generally;
- enable students to demonstrate their knowledge and skills by applying these to complete tasks and activities; and
- provide a basis for further study, work and life.

Subject content: Entry Level

The tables below set out the subject content for digital FSQs at Entry Level across the five skills areas.

'Scope of study' provides guidance to awarding organisations to indicate, or elaborate on, the intended breadth and depth of subject content statements. The examples provided (denoted by 'such as') are illustrative only and are not exhaustive.

As a minimum, students **must** be able to demonstrate all specific assessment content denoted by '(including…)'.

1. Using devices and handling information

Scope of study

- Features of a device refers to examples such as the interface required (keyboard or touchscreen) or how a device functions (hand-held, wearable or wireless connectivity). Uses of a device refers to examples such as for making a phone or video call, or sending emails while away from a desk.
- Applications refers to those for desktop, laptop and mobile devices.
- Applying system settings refers to examples such as changing screen brightness, changing speaker volume, or connecting to a Wi-Fi network at work or home.
- Navigating online content refers to using menus, hyperlinks and browser navigation controls such as back and forward buttons or bookmarks.
- Internet searches refers to a specific and clearly defined piece of information or content that might be required in a work or real-life context.

For specific assessment content, see below.

1.1. Know the main features and uses of different types of device (including desktop, laptop, mobile devices, smart devices).

1.2. Know what an application is and the main types of application software (including email clients, web browsers, mobile device applications, security applications, word processors, presentation software).

1.3. Apply system settings (including display, sound, Wi-Fi, time, language, accessibility).

1.4. Navigate online content to locate required information.

1.5. Carry out searches on the internet (including information, images, videos).

1.6. Use files to read and store information (including creating a file, opening a file, reading information from a file, editing a file, saving a file).

1.7. Use files and folders to organise and retrieve information (including local and remote storage).

1.8. Know when there is a problem with a device or software and know the difference between system errors (including device crashing or freezing, slow response) and user errors (including using incorrect credentials, incorrectly connecting hardware).

1.9. Apply a solution to solve a simple technical problem (including restarting a device to address a system error, correcting a user error).

2. Creating and editing

Scope of study

- Using a suitable application refers to understanding terminology and concepts relating to documents and media and associated applications, such as word-processed or presentations, with an understanding of the purpose of different applications and typical uses.
- Combining different types of information for a given purpose refers to using text, graphics and images in a work or real-life or context, such as creating a poster or presentation for colleagues.

For specific assessment content, see below.

2.1. Use a suitable application to enter, edit and format text (including bold, underline, italics, font sizes and colours, text alignment, bulleted lists, numbered lists).

2.2. Use a suitable application to enter, edit and format graphics (including position, size).

2.3. Combine different types of information (including text, graphics, images) for a given purpose.

2.4. Capture digital media (including image, video) and view in a suitable application.

3. Communicating

Scope of study

- Online communications refers to short, simple texts using email or other messaging applications. Other digital content refers to graphics, images and videos.
- A video call refers to a one-to-one communication via live video.

For specific assessment content, see below.

3.1. Create and edit details in a contacts list.

3.2. Compose and reply to online communications comprising text and other digital content to individual and multiple recipients.

3.3. Initiate and participate in a video call.

3.4. Know what is meant by a digital footprint, understand the implications of a digital footprint, and know the range of digital activities (including social media activity, web searches, emails), that leave a digital footprint.

4. Transacting

Scope of study

- An online form refers to a single page form used to enter information such as registering for or requesting a service, or making an online purchase.
- Personal details refers to name, address, telephone number, email address and payment details.
- Data validation refers to automatic computer checks to ensure that data is entered correctly, such as password requirements or key fields that cannot be left blank.
- Verification checks refers to a check carried out to ensure the user has entered their details accurately, such as following a link in an email received when setting up an online account.

For specific assessment content, see below.

4.1. Complete and submit an online form (including personal details) and comply with data validation.

4.2. Comply with verification checks to complete an online transaction.

5. Being safe and responsible online

Scope of study

- Understanding the need to stay safe online refers to examples such as being aware of risks associated with clicking on unknown links or phishing emails, being aware of the evolving nature of such risks, or knowing that devices may be hacked resulting in personal data being compromised or stolen.
- Authentication methods to access devices refers to examples such as strong passwords, fingerprint, facial or voice recognition.
- Minimising the effects of physical stresses refers to examples such as using an adjustable chair, not being too close or too far away from the screen/device and keyboard or mouse.
- Benefits of using security software refers to examples such as preventing, detecting or removing viruses, malware and other threats.

For specific assessment content, see below.

5.1. Understand the need to stay safe and respect others when using the internet and communicating online.

5.2. Know simple methods to protect personal information and privacy online (including not sharing personal information, looking for HTTPS when logging in).

5.3. Set up and use security features (including authentication methods) to access devices and online services.

5.4. Understand the benefits of using security software (including anti-virus, firewall) to protect against online risks.

5.5. Know of and know how to minimise the effects of physical stresses (including pain from poorly positioned equipment and/or bad posture, repetitive strain injury, eye strain) that may result from using devices.

Learning aims and outcomes at Level 1

Digital FSQs will enable students to initiate and participate in digital and online activities safely in the workplace and in other real-life contexts. At this level, digital FSQs should:

- enable students to increase their confidence and fluency in their use of digital knowledge and skills, and develop a positive attitude towards the use of digital skills;
- enable students to demonstrate their knowledge and skills by applying these to complete tasks and activities;
- introduce students to areas of life and work which may be new or unfamiliar, and tasks and activities that they may encounter in future;
- enable students to develop an appreciation of the importance of digital skills in the workplace and in life generally; and
- provide a basis for further study, work and life.

Subject content: Level 1

The tables below set out the subject content for digital FSQs at Level 1 across the five skills areas.

Awarding organisations should note that the content at Level 1 subsumes and builds upon the content at Entry Level where relevant.

'Scope of study' provides guidance to awarding organisations to indicate, or elaborate on, the intended breadth and depth of subject content statements. The examples provided (denoted by 'such as') are illustrative only and are not exhaustive.

As a minimum, students **must** be able to demonstrate all specific assessment content denoted by '(including…)'.

1. Using devices and handling information

Scope of study

- Device refers to examples such as desktop, laptop, mobile devices, and smart devices. An appropriate file naming convention refers to naming files in a way that describes or indicates the content or the use of the file, or includes the date and/or time information.
- Limitations on file sizes when using some services refers to email attachments and file size upload limits.
- Online resources refers to examples such as online tutorials, FAQs or help facilities.

For specific assessment content, see below.

1.1. Carry out searches on the internet (including use of keywords, exact phrases, search filters).

1.2. Take account of currency, reliability and copyright when selecting information from the internet.

1.3. Understand that search results may include sponsored results or advertisements, and be able to recognise these.

1.4. Carry out searches for files (including on file names, partial file names, file content).

1.5. Create and use a hierarchical folder structure to organise files and use an appropriate file naming convention.

1.6. Save a file on cloud storage using one device and open it on another device.

1.7. Know and be able to appropriately use terminology (including bytes, kilobytes, megabytes, gigabytes, terabytes) describing data storage requirements.

1.8. Know and understand limitations on file sizes when using some online services, and the benefits of using file compression to make effective use of storage capacity and to reduce data transfer times.

1.9. Use online resources to identify solutions to common technical problems (including when to reinstall an application, change Wi-Fi settings, change a system or software setting) and apply the solution.

2. Creating and editing

Scope of study

- Using appropriate layout conventions refers to adopting common conventions, such as text, tables, images and charts, for specific purposes, such as a formal report for managers, an advertisement for consumers or a presentation for colleagues.
- An appropriate tool for editing refers to a desktop application or an application on a touchscreen device.
- Simple formulae refers to up to two mathematical operators. Sorting numeric data refers to one criterion. Filtering data refers to one criterion.
- An appropriate type of chart refers to bar/column charts, pie charts and line graphs.

For specific assessment content, see below.

2.1. Use suitable applications (including word-processing, document or web presentation software), to enter, edit, format, layout and save information (including text, tables, graphics, charts) for a range of purposes and audiences.

2.2. Use appropriate layout conventions for information (including formal and informal communication, presentation, advertisement) and audiences (including familiar, unfamiliar audience).

2.3 Edit (including caption, crop, resize, change contrast, change colour balance) an image using an appropriate tool.

2.4. Process numeric data using simple formulae (including sum, subtraction, multiplication, division, maximum, minimum, average) using relative cell references

2.5. Process (including sort, filter) numeric data by values in a column.

2.6. Format numeric data (including font sizes, font styles, alignment, cell formatting, merging cells, splitting cells, row height, column width).

2.7. Chart a single series of numeric data using an appropriate type of chart and apply suitable titles and labels (including chart title, axis titles, data legends and data labels).

3. Communicating

Scope of study

- Using email or online messages for a range of contexts and audiences refers to common work or real-life scenarios, such as to colleagues at work, the general public, or users of a social media platform.

For specific assessment content, see below.

3.1. Use email for a range of contexts and audiences.

3.2. Use online messages (including instant message, text message, social media) for a range of contexts and audiences.

3.3. Know what steps can be taken to limit a digital footprint (including use of privacy tools to manage cookies and website tracking, private browsing, restricting GPS information).

4. Transacting

Scope of study

- Online services refers to examples such as shopping, banking, utilities, government services or media services.
- Uploading documents or images refers to locating a file and understanding that file sizes may need to be reduced before submitting.

For specific assessment content, see below.

4.1. Manage account settings for an online service (including personal details, login credentials, marketing and communication preferences).

4.2. Complete online forms and upload documents or images.

4.3. Carry out checks to reduce the risks involved in transactions online (including checking for the padlock next to the URL in the browser, checking if the website appears professional with a legitimate domain name, checking reviews).

5. Being safe and responsible online

Scope of study

- In understanding key rights under data protection laws, it is not necessary to understand issues of data protection compliance relating to organisations.
- Health risks resulting from using devices and the internet refers to physical and/or psychological. Minimising these refers to examples such as taking regular breaks, using a wrist rest with a mouse, limiting screen time, avoiding screen time close to bedtime or reporting cyberbullying.

For specific assessment content, see below.

5.1. Understand key rights under data protection laws (including right to see what personal data organisations hold about you, right to withdraw consent) and the circumstances where you can request that personal data be rectified or deleted.

5.2. Understand the importance of protecting personal information and privacy online and know methods to do so (including private browsing, social media settings, settings on a mobile device to restrict or grant GPS location information, using a secondary email address).

5.3. Know how to backup files to the cloud.

5.4. Know how to avoid exposure to malware (including worms, trojans and ransomware).

5.5. Know of and know how to minimise the effects of health risks (including weight gain, decline in physical fitness, poor sleep patterns) that may result from using devices and the internet.

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