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1 Preface

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 Functional Skills provide the essential literacy, numeracy and, where applicable, digital skills that enable Defence personnel to learn, perform and progress throughout their careers. They form the foundation upon which military, professional and technical competence is built, supporting operational effectiveness, career development, apprenticeships, accreditation and successful transition to civilian employment. Defence recognises that strong Functional Skills are critical enablers of individual performance and organisational capability, ensuring personnel can access training, achieve qualifications and operate effectively in increasingly complex working environments.

1.1.2 This chapter sets out Defence policy for the identification, delivery, management and assurance of Functional Skills provision across the Armed Forces and wider Defence enterprise. It establishes the responsibilities of Single Services, Chains of Command and learners, and outlines the principles governing the provision of support, funding and achievement of nationally recognised qualifications. Defence is committed to providing accessible, high-quality Functional Skills opportunities that support personnel from recruitment through to resettlement, ensuring that every individual has the opportunity to develop the foundational skills necessary to fulfil their potential and contribute effectively to Defence outcomes.

1.1.3 As Defence continues to develop a more skills-based workforce, Functional Skills remain a distinct and mandatory education policy area, providing the underpinning knowledge and capability required for lifelong learning, apprenticeships, professional development and workforce agility. They represent the baseline educational standards from which broader Defence skills can be developed, recognised and applied in support of operational capability.

2 Functional Skills (Literacy and Numeracy) Policy

Policy Sponsor: TSLD, MSHQ

2.1 Introduction

2.1.1 **Functional Skills (FS)** are mandatory for promotion for all SP. They underpin safe and effective training, technical competence, career progression, retention and resettlement. From recruitment onwards, SP face immediate FS demands, including minimum English speaking and listening standards assessed during selection. Functional Skills are essential in Phase 2 training to support the development of professional skills. Single Services (sS) should aim to improve English and Mathematics by at least one national level, ideally to Level 2. Where Level 2 qualifications are not held, individuals must be assessed to inform targeted Functional Skills support.

2.1.2 For SP already on the trained strength, Functional Skills needs must be addressed as early as practicable, taking account of operational priorities, the scale and distribution of legacy need, and Defence's requirement to generate operational capability. Where practicable, Service Leavers with Functional Skills needs should be supported prior to discharge.

2.2 Principles

2.2.1 sS are to apply the following principles:

- **Assessment and Screening**. FS screening helps to gauge initial overall ability. Assessment provides more detailed evaluation of areas of strength and where further support may be required. This is vital to provide the correct level of support to each SP.

- **Initial Screening**. Screening of English Speaking and Listening (S&L) skills is to be conducted for all recruits as part of the recruitment and selection process.

- **Functional Skills Initial Assessment (IA).** sS are to conduct FS IA for all recruits who do not hold Level 2 English and mathematics or equivalent qualifications, ideally, no later than Week 3 of Phase 1 training.

- **Diagnostic Assessment (DAss).** DAss of FS (English), ESOL and/or FS (Mathematics) for all those identified as having FS needs should be conducted, ideally before allocation to a programme of FS learning to enable the FS specialist to devise a support programme that is most appropriate to the needs of the individual learner. DAss should be regarded as an on-going process that is repeated as required until the SP achieves Level 2 qualification.

2.2.2 **Assessment and Screening Tools**. To ensure consistency, reliability, and validity of assessment:

- Appropriate FS tools, such as the DAss Tool, are to be used.
- Appropriate screening tools for English S&L skills are to be used.
- When measuring a SP's attainment of FS standards, assessments tools used by the relevant Awarding Organisation (AO) that lead to nationally recognised FS qualifications are to be used.

2.2.3 **Support.** sS are to provide appropriate levels of FS support to ensure that the needs of its SP are met, including:

- FS learning is progressive and coherent, throughout the SP career, from recruitment to resettlement.
- Offering FS support to SP from other Services, where practicable.
- Where feasible and permissible, SP deployed on operations or extended training activities, are provided with appropriate FS support to meet their needs.
- Ensuring that SP have access to FS Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG), and provision, including support for S&L skills. An appropriate blend of delivery methods should be used to meet the needs of the learners.
- Providing learning support for all personnel, including those with Specific Learning Differences, as detailed in JSP 822, Chapter 7.

2.2.4 **Responsibilities.** SP have a personal responsibility to address their identified FS shortfalls, supported and encouraged by their sS Chain of Command. sS must ensure that SP have appropriate specialist support, opportunities and time available in working hours. FS support and accreditation are to be free (publicly funded at the point of delivery) to SP.

2.2.5 **Qualifying standard.** The principal output is the attainment of a FS qualification (or equivalent nationally recognised qualification), appropriate to the SP's needs. All FS support must be geared towards achieving this.

2.2.6 **Design and development of training**. The FS requirements within specific trade, branch and employment roles are to be identified using the Defence Systems Approach to Training process.

2.3 Governance

2.3.1 **Defence responsibilities**. Defence will:

- Set the Defence FS Direction and manage through TSLD and MSHQ.
- Monitor, report and address strategic implementation issues through the Functional Skills Working Group (FSWG) and Defence Through Life Development Steering Group (DTLDSG).
- Provide the Departmental link with the Government's Skills Agenda through liaison with the Department for Education (DfE).
- Support implementation through liaison with DfE and their equivalent organisations in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland (as well as national bodies concerned with the delivery of FS provision and qualification).

2.3.2 **sS responsibilities**. sS are to:

- Identify sS leads for FS support to their SP.
- Develop sS FS policies and implementation plans to support this Defence Direction and evaluate their impact.
- Manage the supply of support to meet their FS requirements, using internal and external resources.
- Resource their FS support infrastructure.
- Ensure quality assurance and continuous improvement of FS support provided.
- Capture and collate management information to monitor implementation and report progress, as required, to TSLD.
- Send empowered representation to the FSWG to ensure effective implementation of Armed Forces FS support.

2.3.3 **Standards.** The minimum FS standards to be achieved by SP are detailed below. Evidence of meeting these standards is only to be demonstrated by SP holding the relevant FS qualification or equivalent award. A list of awards that meet the Defence Standards is provided in Functional Skills qualifications: requirements and guidance - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk). The following exceptions to this qualification rule apply as evidence of meeting recruiting and selection standards:

- Results of pre-enlistment English S&L screening.

- Results of the FS IAs, where no FS qualifications are held or where valid qualification certificates are not available for authentication.

2.3.4 **sS must ensure** that SP are screened for English and Mathematics at the following stages:

- **On Enlistment:** English Reading and Writing – Entry Level 2, English Speaking and Listening – Level 1, Mathematics – Entry Level 2.

- **At start of Phase 2 Training:** English Reading and Writing – Entry Level 3, English Speaking and Listening – Level 1, Mathematics – Entry Level 3.

2.3.5 **sS must ensure** that SP must achieve English and Mathematics at the following stages:

- **No later than promotion to OR4**[1]: English Reading and Writing – Level 1, English Speaking and Listening – Level 1, Mathematics – Level 1.

- **No later than promotion to OR6**: English Reading and Writing – Level 2, English Speaking and Listening – Level 2, Mathematics – Level 2.

2.3.6 **sS should ensure** that SP achieve the following:

- **Within 3 years of joining service**: English Reading and Writing – Level 1, English Speaking and Listening – Level 1, Mathematics – Level 1. This should be in line with completion of relevant apprenticeship programme. To be determined by each sS, including action to take if SP fails to achieve this level iaw sS regulations.

- **Within 8 years of joining Service**: English Reading and Writing – Level 2, English Speaking and Listening – Level 2, Mathematics – Level 2. To be determined by each sS, including action to take if SP fails to achieve this level iaw sS regulations.

2.4 Management

2.4.1 **sS implementation in Joint Commands or Defence establishments.** sS are to ensure that this Defence Direction on FS is applied to their SP serving in Joint Commands or Defence Establishments, through their respective FS

1 Noting this is different for all 3 services and is subject to a review.

policy leads, and the agreed arrangements reflected in their implementation. Where pan-Defence issues arise, they should be raised initially through the DTLDSG.

2.4.2 **Data capture.** sS should ensure that details of FS assessments and qualifications are captured appropriately in order to allow them to track and measure progress/success.

2.4.3 **Tracking.** sS should ensure that the FS records for SP are transferred with them as they are assigned. In addition, sS should ensure that Individual Learning Plans (ILPs) are transferred when a SP moves and that there is appropriate liaison between the respective losing and gaining units to ensure continuity of any programme of support.

2.4.4 **Professional standards for FS support staff.** sS are to ensure that all staff employed in the delivery of FS assessment and provision hold the requisite professional qualifications, appropriate for their specific teaching/support role. Training staff should be provided with the opportunity to gain relevant professional qualification(s) free at the point of delivery and they must meet the requirements of the Defence Trainer Capability Direction contained within. The specific qualification requirements are confirmed through the FSWG.

2.4.5 **FS assessment and testing tools.** Only assessment and testing tools that have been validated against the national standards for FS are to be used. For the purposes of commonality, particularly in joint environments, sS should move to the adoption of assessment and testing tools. This is to be co-ordinated through the FSWG.

2.4.6 **Quality assurance.** sS are to ensure that all internally and externally delivered FS provision is quality assured iaw Lines of Defence Assurance (LoDA). Where sS draw down public funding directly, they are to ensure they meet the requirements of the DfE.

2.5 Funding

2.5.1 **Armed Forces funding**. Armed Forces FS provision will be (in most cases) a blend of in-house and external provision.

2.5.2 **sS are to fund:**

- **Specialist workforce**. Sufficient in-house specialist practitioners to meet the FS requirements that are not met from external or DfE funded providers and, co-ordinate the delivery of that provision across their Service.

- **FS staff training**. Training for in-house specialist practitioners and support staff to meet the required professional standards, where this is not externally funded.

- **Trainee costs**. All direct and indirect costs incurred by initial training establishments, where training has to be extended to cover FS provision to meet the minimum FS Entry Level 3 standard, by the start of Phase 2 training.

- **FS resources**. FS support materials, essential ICT, audio-visual equipment and associated consumables, and any other essential resource costs.

2.5.3 sS should fully exploit access to public funding, including drawing down Government funding where possible and accessing FS provision delivered through local providers and funded by Mayoral Strategic Authorities[2].

2.6 Points of Contact

RN	Navy Command HQ, Trg, TMG PACC
Army	HQ Army, Army LFC-G7-L&D-DACOS
RAF	Air Command, 22 Gp, Trg Pol

2 Through DfE and their equivalents in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

3 Annexes

a. FS and ESOL Qualifications Levels and Proxy Qualifications

b. Components of FS Provision

Annex A to
JSP 822 Ch 6
Dated Oct 26

A - FS and ESOL Qualification Levels and Proxy Qualifications

1. National FS and ESOL qualification levels[3]

Level	National Curriculum (NC) Equivalence
Level 2	GCSE Grades A* to C
Level 1	GCSE Grades D to G
Entry Level 3	NC Level 4 (Primary – Key Stage 2)
Entry Level 2	NC Level 2 (Primary – Key Stage 1)
Entry Level 1	NC Level 1

2. Defence approved proxy qualifications for FS

a. Despite Government direction that there are to be no proxy (substitute) qualifications[4] for FS qualifications, Defence is authorised to determine FS proxies, for its own internal purposes (such as, recruit entry standards or for promotion). Where this is the case, UK qualifications that Defence will accept as proxies for FS Level 1 and 2 qualifications are shown below[5].

3. Proxy Qualifications for Level 1 FS (English) and FS (Mathematics)

FS (English) Level 1	FS (Mathematics) Level 1
GCSE English – Grades 9 to 1	GCSE Mathematics – Grades 9 to 1
GCSE English Literature – Grades 9 to 1	Standard Grade Mathematics – Credit
AQA GCSE General Studies – Grades A* to G	Standard Grade Mathematics – General
Standard Grade English - Credit	Mathematics – Intermediate 1
Standard Grade English - General	Mathematics – Intermediate 2
English and Communication – Intermediate 2	Mathematics – Higher
English and Communication – Intermediate 1	Mathematics – Advanced Higher
English and Communication – Higher	Applied Mathematics – Advanced Higher
English – Advanced Higher	Leaving Certificate Mathematics (Higher) Grade A1 - C2

3 With effect from Summer 2017, in England, GCSEs awarded for English Language, English Literature and Mathematics will be graded on a scale of 9 to 1 (previously Grades A* to G). Subsequently, all other GCSEs will move to this new grading system from Summer 2018.

4 Other than GCSE English and mathematics.

5 From Oct 12, FS or GCSE qualifications became the mandated English and mathematics awards delivered within Apprenticeships. By Sep 17, all current Apprenticeship frameworks are to have been replaced with new standards and requirements – as detailed in the Future of Apprenticeships in England: Implementation Plan (Oct 13). Further information on the transition arrangements for can be found at www.gov.uk/government/topics/further-education-and-skills.

FS (English) Level 1	FS (Mathematics) Level 1
Leaving Certificate English (Higher) Grade A1 - C2	Leaving Certificate Mathematics (Ordinary) Grade A1 - B3
Leaving Certificate English (Ordinary) Grade A1 - B3	Leaving Certificate Mathematics (Ordinary) Grade C1 - D3
Leaving Certificate English (Ordinary) Grade C1 - D3	GCE Mathematics Grade A to E
GCE English Language and Literature Grade A to E	GCE AS Use of Mathematics Grade A to E
GCE AS Level English Language Grade A to E	GCE AS Level Mathematics Grade A to E
GCE AS Level English Literature Grade A to E	GCE AS Level Pure Mathematics Grade A to E
GCE AS Level English Language and Literature Grade A to E	GCE AS Level Further Mathematics Grade A to E
GCE A Level English Language Grade A to E	GCE AS Level Statistics Grade A to E
GCE A Level English Literature Grade A to E	GCE AS Mechanics Grade A to E
Certificate in Skills for Life ESOL - Level 1	GCE AS Discrete Mathematics Grade A to E
Certificate in Skills for Life ESOL - Level 2	GCE AS Applied Mathematics Grade A to E
	GCE A Level Mathematics Grade A to E
	GCE A Level Pure Mathematics Grade A to E
	GCE A Level Further Mathematics Grade A to E
	GCE A Level Statistics Grade A to E

4. Proxy Qualifications for Level 2 FS (English) and FS (Mathematics)

FS (English) Level 2	FS (Mathematics) Level 2
GCSE English – Grades 9 to 4	GCSE Mathematics – Grades 9 to 4
GCSE English Literature – Grades 9 to 4	Standard Grade Mathematics – Credit
AQA GCSE General Studies – Grades A* to C	Mathematics – Intermediate 2
Standard Grade English – Credit	Mathematics – Higher
English and Communication – Intermediate 2	Mathematics – Advanced Higher
English and Communication – Higher	Applied Mathematics – Advanced Higher
English – Advanced Higher	Leaving Certificate Mathematics (Higher) Grade A1 - C2
Leaving Certificate English (Higher) Grade A1 - C2	Leaving Certificate Mathematics (Ordinary) Grade A1 - B3

FS (English) Level 2	FS (Mathematics) Level 2
Leaving Certificate English (Ordinary) Grade A1 - B3	GCE Mathematics Grade A to E
GCE English Language and Literature Grade A to E	GCE AS Use of Mathematics Grade A to E
GCE AS Level English Language Grade A to E	GCE AS Level Mathematics Grade A to E
GCE AS Level English Literature Grade A to E	GCE AS Level Pure Mathematics Grade A to E
GCE AS Level English Language and Literature Grade A to E	GCE AS Level Further Mathematics Grade A to E
GCE A Level English Language Grade A to E	GCE AS Level Statistics Grade A to E
GCE A Level English Literature Grade A to E	GCE AS Mechanics Grade A to E
Certificate in Skills for Life ESOL – Level 2	GCE AS Discrete Mathematics Grade A to E
	GCE AS Applied Mathematics Grade A to E
	GCE AS Level Mathematics Grade A to E
	GCE A Level Mathematics Grade A to E
	GCE A Level Pure Mathematics Grade A to E
	GCE A Level Further Mathematics Grade A to E
	GCE A Level Statistics Grade A to E

Notes

1. All publicly funded national qualifications must be aligned to the Regulated Qualifications Framework[6].

2. National ESOL standards are the same as for FS (English). ESOL learners work towards these standards through a separate curriculum and programme of learning that is tailored specifically to the needs of learners whose first language is not English.

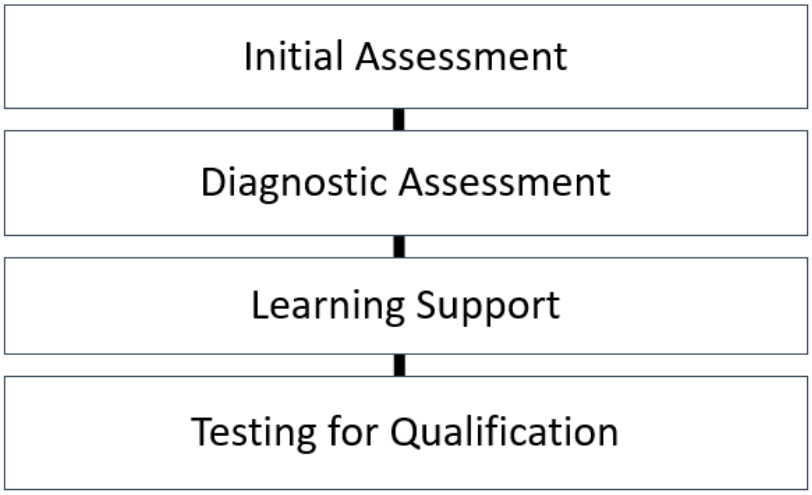
3. A proxy qualification is a recognised substitute qualification. An equivalent qualification is one that has the same recognised attainment standards but may vary significantly in the breadth of curriculum covered. For instance, the mathematics skills' demands of a Certificate in Adult Numeracy at Level 2 are broadly the same as those of a GCSE Mathematics Grade A* to C (Level 2) but the breadth of the GCSE curriculum (and that assessed for qualification) is much greater than for the numeracy certificate. In this example, whilst both awards are equivalent, the Level 2 GCSE is a recognised proxy for the Level 2 certificate but not vice-versa.

[6] Find a regulated qualification - GOV.UK

Annex B to
JSP 822 Ch 6
Dated Oct 26

B - Components of FS Provision

1. The full range of FS provision may be described as four broad categories:



2. **Initial Assessment (IA)**. IA gives an indication of the general level of a SP's English, mathematics [or ICT] ability in terms of national attainment levels (from Entry Level 1 up to Level 2). Prior to IA, it may be desirable to conduct a quicker but less comprehensive screening or skills check to identify if a SP has difficulties in these areas. The results of screenings should not be used to determine a SP's level of ability. IA should, where practical, be conducted only once (ideally as part of the recruitment/selection process) with results recorded for subsequent use and placed on JPA. Additional IAs should be considered when a year or more has elapsed and no FS learning programme has been followed.

3. **Diagnostic Assessment (DAss)**. DAss identifies a SP's specific ability profile and highlights strengths and areas for improvement. This helps to provide a description of learning needs and assists the specialist FS practitioner in the compilation of a learner's ILP. The ILP is used to outline the short- and longer-term learning targets, the tailored programme to address the English and mathematics needs, as well as a record of progress and achievement. DAss should be conducted in a timely fashion in order for the FS specialist to devise a programme of support that is most appropriate for the needs of the learner.

4. **Learning support**. This is the programme of support developed by the specialist FS practitioner for the learner. It may comprise 1:1 tuition, group work, intensive courses, ICT-based programmes and distributed learning. For some, this support may be a week's intensive course to brush up skills forgotten since school. For others with significant English or mathematics difficulties, this may require much longer term (and perhaps 1:1) support. This provision may be delivered as discrete,

standalone FS programmes, or integrated/embedded within appropriate military/vocational training.

5. **Testing for qualification**. All FS programmes offered to SP must lead to the appropriate, nationally recognised qualification. This will most usually require an externally set and marked assessment. National qualification assessment criteria are issued by the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual).

4 Document Information

4.1 Document Coverage

This Policy supersedes all previous MOD Policy on Skills and Accreditation. The totality of documents included in this Policy Suite are listed in the Policy and Guidance Portal.

4.2 Document Information

Filename:	Functional Skills Policy
Document ID:	JSP 822, Chapter 6
Owning Function / Team:	Talent, Skills, Learning and Development (TSLD)
Service Owner (1*):	People-TSLD-Hd OF6
Approving Authority:	1* TSLD Training and Education Steering Group (TSLD TESG)

4.3 Document Versions

Version	Pub. Date	Revised pages
5.0	Oct 26	Document Restructure
4.0	December 2024	2 – 14 (Skills approach in the context of PDSF) – Changes highlighted blue.
3.0	February 2024	Press here
2.0	October 2023	Press here
1.0	September 2022	Press here

MOD will review this Policy in three years, or when changes to legislation or best practice dictates.

4.4 Linked JSPs

JSP Number	JSP Name
100	Defence Holistic Transition Policy
755	Centre-Determined Policy for Career Management and the Admin of Tri-Service Positions and Assignments

5 Applicability

The policy contained in this Chapter applies to the Whole Force which encompasses Regular and Reserve personnel[7], MOD Civil Servants, and civilians, including the Ministry of Defence Police and contractors. It is noted that training sourced through the pan-Governmental 'Civil Service Learning / Government Campus' is not subject to the policies in this document.

6 Glossary

The Glossary of Definitions, Terms and Acronyms can be found in JSP822 V8.1 Preface

7 This includes UTCs, and military personnel (Regular & FTRS) that instruct Cadets and CFAVs. This does not include non-military personnel that instruct Cadets and CFAVs.