

Essential Skills Wales Suite of Qualifications Handbook





Qualifications Overview

Qualifications Overview

Subject area	Essential skills
Age groups approved	Pre 16, 16+, 18+ See section 2.4.1
Entry requirements	None
Assessment	Controlled Tasks, Confirmatory Tests, Structured Discussions. See qualifications for their individual requirements.
Approval arrangements	Centres must receive Agored Cymru approval prior to delivery
Support materials	See section 3.3
Registration and certification	Learners should be registered at least 4 weeks prior to assessment. Centres will receive certificates within 15 days of claim submission. Immediate e-certification will also be available

Title and level	Accreditation number	Approval number
Essential Communication Skills (EComms)		
Entry Level Essential Skills Wales in Communication (Entry 1)	601/7781/0	C00/0754/8
Entry Level Essential Skills Wales in Communication (Entry 2)	601/7782/2	C00/0754/9
Entry Level Essential Skills Wales in Communication (Entry 3)	601/7783/4	C00/0755/0
Level 1 Essential Communication Skills	601/6825/0	C00/0745/6
Level 2 Essential Communication Skills	601/6828/6	C00/0745/7
Level 3 Essential Communication Skills	601/6829/8	C00/0745/8



Qualifications Overview

Title and level	Accreditation number	Approval number
Essential Application of Number Skills (EAoNS)		
Entry Level Essential Skills Wales in Application of Number (Entry 1)	601/7777/9	C00/0754/5
Entry Level Essential Skills Wales in Application of Number (Entry 2)	601/7778/0	C00/0754/6
Entry Level Essential Skills Wales in Application of Number (Entry 3)	601/7779/2	C00/0754/7
Level 1 Essential Application of Number Skills	601/6846/8	C00/0745/9
Level 2 Essential Application of Number Skills	601/6847/X	C00/0746/0
Level 3 Essential Application of Number Skills	601/6863/8	C00/0746/1
Essential Digital Literacy Skills (EDLS)		
Entry Level Essential Digital Literacy Skills (Entry 1)	601/6873/0	C00/0746/8
Entry Level Essential Digital Literacy Skills (Entry 2)	601/6874/2	C00/0746/9
Entry Level Essential Digital Literacy Skills (Entry 3)	601/6876/6	C00/0747/0
Level 1 Essential Digital Literacy Skills	601/6868/7	C00/0746/2
Level 2 Essential Digital Literacy Skills	601/6870/5	C00/0746/3
Level 3 Essential Digital Literacy Skills	601/6872/9	C00/0746/4



Content

Title and level	Accreditation number	Approval number
Essential Employability Skills (EES)		
Entry Level Essential Employability Skills (Entry 3)	601/6866/3	C00/0747/1
Level 1 Essential Employability Skills	601/6924/2	C00/0746/5
Level 2 Essential Employability Skills	601/6864/X	C00/0746/6
Level 3 Essential Employability Skills	601/6865/1	C00/0746/7



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Introduction

1. Introduction

The Essential Skills Wales (ESW) suite of qualifications is designed to assess the range of skills that learners need for successful learning, employment and life. They provide a single ladder of progression, spanning six levels and comprising qualifications in:

- Essential Application of Number Skills (EAoNS) (Entry 1 – Level 3)
- Essential Communication Skills (ECommS) (Entry 1 – Level 3)
- Essential Digital Literacy Skills (EDLS) (Entry 1 – Level 3)
- Essential Employability Skills (EES) (Entry 3 – Level 3).

ESW qualifications are intended for use in a range of settings. They focus on the practical application of these skills, especially learners' capacity to transfer their knowledge and understanding between contexts and purposes.

This handbook sets out the administration and assessment conduct requirements for the Essential Skills Wales suite of qualifications. Whilst it should be read in conjunction with the 'Essential Skills Wales Suite, Delivery Guidance for Practitioners' document, please note that for assessment and qualification achievement purposes, any requirements in **this** handbook take precedence.

Except where indicated otherwise, the administration and conduct requirements set out in this handbook are common to all Essential Skills Wales awarding bodies.

At the time of writing, these are:

- Agored Cymru
- City & Guilds
- Pearson
- WJEC.

Note: the Essential Skills Wales suite of qualifications is regulated by Qualifications Wales, and approved for use in **Wales**.



Introduction

1.1. Key features of Essential Skills

Essential Application of Number Skills qualifications are about demonstrating skills in:

- understanding numerical data
- carrying out calculations
- interpreting results and presenting findings.

Learners should understand numbers and be able to work with them efficiently and confidently to be successful in all areas of work and life.

It is important that these skills are not taught in isolation and that learners are encouraged to make connections between each of the skill areas so that they are able to apply them to solve problems in a range of contexts.

The method of assessment employed within these qualifications ensures that candidates can select the most appropriate data and methods to solve a problem and that they are able to report on their findings. At each level, source documents are provided from which learners are able to select the required data to complete a given activity.

Essential Communication Skills qualifications focus on skills in:

- speaking and listening
- reading
- writing.

Learners should develop their ability to read critically and flexibly and write with accuracy in different styles and forms, depending on the purpose of the text.

They also need to employ effective speaking, listening and discussion skills appropriate for a particular situation.

Essential Communication Skills qualifications employ an integrated assessment approach which reflects the inter-relationship between reading, writing, speaking and listening.

At levels 1 to 3, candidates are provided with source documents, the content of which will be used for given writing and discussion tasks. At levels 2 and 3, candidates will also be required to give a presentation.



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	Level 1	Level 2 and level 3
Part 1	Reading (1 document) Discussion Written task	Reading (2 documents) Discussion Written task
Part 2	Reading (1 document) Written task	Written Task
Part 3		Presentation

1.2. Essential Digital Literacy Skills

Essential Digital Literacy Skills is about knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours in the use of digital devices.

There are six strands to Essential Digital Literacy Skills from Entry 1 – level 3:

Digital Responsibility – knowing how to stay safe and act appropriately online

Digital Productivity – knowing which technologies, tools and techniques to use and how to organise, share and protect digital information

Digital Information Literacy – being able to find, critically evaluate and use digital information safely

Digital Collaboration – sharing knowledge and collaborating with others to complete tasks and solve problems

Digital Creativity – being able to use digital media to complete tasks, generate content and develop opportunities

Digital Learning – understanding how technology can extend learning opportunities.

To gain the Essential Digital Literacy Skills qualification, candidates will demonstrate their skills in a controlled task, set within a given context. A structured discussion is used to address those skills not readily assessable within the controlled task.

At entry level, there will be some preparatory work required by the centres before the candidate is able to start the controlled task. This is detailed in the assessment pack for each task.



Introduction

1.3. Essential Employability Skills

Essential Employability Skills are a set of social behaviours and skills that can be acquired and are seen as relevant to performing within all employment roles. These behaviours and skills help employees interact and work with others in a variety of situations and are transferable, not only between different roles within an organisation, but across different employment sectors. Essential Employability Skills do not include technical skills or qualifications required to undertake specific specialist roles.

The Entry 3 to Level 3 Essential Employability Skills qualifications consist of four main subject areas:

- Planning and Organisation
- Creativity and Innovation
- Critical Thinking and Problem Solving
- Personal Effectiveness

In order to gain the Essential Employability Skills qualifications, candidates must demonstrate their skills in both a controlled task and a structured discussion.



Introduction

1.4. Qualifications structure and content

The Essential Skills Wales suite of qualifications is based on design principles that were developed by Welsh Government following the 2012 Review of Qualifications, and published by Qualifications Wales in 2015 and updated in 2022. The qualifications' specifications, and in most cases the assessment requirements, are common across all Essential Skills Wales awarding bodies.

The only exceptions to this are the Entry level Essential Skills Wales in Application of Number and Communication qualifications, which are based on the previous (2010) evidence and knowledge requirements.

Agored Cymru's Entry level Application of Number and Communication qualifications consist of tasks which must be completed under controlled conditions but, unlike the level 1-3 qualifications, are not prescriptive in the time allowed for completion. The standards against which these qualifications are set can be viewed [here](#).

Detailed information about the subject content, along with the range of skills and knowledge that are expected to be taught and learned at each level, are set out in the 'Essential Skills Wales Suite, Delivery Guidance for Practitioners' document. The qualifications' assessments in each case reflect these standards.

1.5. Requirements for certification

With the exception of the Entry level Essential Skills Wales in Application of Number and Communication qualifications, all Essential Skills Wales qualifications feature a **two-part** summative assessment comprising:

- controlled task
- confirmatory element (test or structured discussion).

Each qualification requires the successful completion of **both** parts of the summative assessment at the **same** level; no partial or 'unit' certification is available.

Once the controlled task component has been successfully achieved, the centre can claim for this through the Agored Cymru claims process. Following successful completion of both the task and test component (where applicable), the qualification will be awarded and the certificate generated.



Centre requirements

2. Centre requirements

2.1. Centre and qualification approval

Agored Cymru operates robust quality assurance processes which are designed to support centres and ensure the valid award of our units and qualifications.

A provider not currently delivering Agored Cymru units or qualifications must first become an approved Agored Cymru centre. Applications to become an approved centre are supported by the team at Agored Cymru, with initial information available on the [Agored Cymru website](#).

For an approved centre wishing to deliver Essential Skills Wales qualifications, the process includes the submission of a request to add the qualification to the centre's framework. This request will include detailed statements relating to the specific quality assurance requirements associated with Essential Skills Wales.

The delivery of Essential Skills Wales qualifications will also be dependent on full compliance with a range of other quality assurance processes as detailed in section 5.

2.2. Resource requirements

2.2.1. Centre staffing

Staff involved in the assessment or internal quality assurance of these qualifications **must** have a detailed understanding of the qualification specifications and assessment requirements, as set out in:

- this handbook
- the relevant controlled task (and structured discussion, where applicable) assessment pack.

They must also be familiar with the contents of the 'Essential Skills Wales Suite, Delivery Guidance for Practitioners' document for the relevant subject area(s).

In order to perform these functions effectively, assessors and internal quality assurers will need to be personally competent in the Essential Skill(s) being taught and assessed, as well as familiar with the assessment and internal quality assurance arrangements applicable to these qualifications. These are summarised in Section 4 of this handbook. More detailed guidance is provided in Agored Cymru's Guide to Internal Quality Assurance document.



Centre requirements

2.2.2. Teaching and subject content qualifications

Whilst Agored Cymru needs to be assured that centre staff are capable of assessing these qualifications consistently to the required standard, it is important to appreciate that Agored Cymru has no direct responsibility for determining their suitability to teach or prepare learners.

Nevertheless, it is vital that any learners working towards the Essential Skills Wales qualifications are adequately supported by capable staff, and in practice it will be common for staff to be involved in both teaching and the assessment process.

Whilst Agored Cymru does not require assessors and internal quality assurers to hold any specific assessment, quality assurance, subject content or teaching qualifications, they **must** be able to fully understand and apply the relevant assessment/marking criteria.

This will require them to be personally competent in the skills being assessed, as well as being familiar with the assessment process.

Centres must also ensure that they keep abreast of any emerging workforce expectations or specific requirements that might emerge from other bodies for contracting, funding or inspection purposes.

It is therefore strongly recommended that centre staff work towards an appropriate Essential Skills practitioner qualification (at Level 3 or higher) if they do not already hold one.

Details of the Agored Cymru Essential Skills Practitioner qualifications can be found on the [Agored Cymru website](#).

2.2.3. Continuing professional development (CPD)

Centres must support Essential Skills staff to ensure that their subject knowledge, as well as their understanding of the requirements of these qualifications, remains current. Approaches to delivery, mentoring, training, assessment and quality assurance must also be in line with best practice and take account of any relevant public policy or other developments.

Details of bespoke training events are publicised on the [Training and Events page](#) on the Agored Cymru website.



Centre requirements

2.3. Key roles for assessment

2.3.1. Controlled tasks and structured discussions

All Essential Skills Wales qualifications involve a summative controlled task. Whilst the controlled tasks are externally set*, they are internally assessed and quality assured by centres.

Controlled tasks will be available in a range of contexts. Centres are able to choose the most appropriate for their learners.

In addition, Essential Digital Literacy Skills (EDLS) and Essential Employability Skills (EES) qualifications also involve a structured discussion that takes place **after** the controlled task has been successfully completed.

To meet the assessment conduct and quality assurance requirements for the controlled tasks and structured discussions, centres must ensure that named contacts are provided for each of the following roles:

- Head of Organisation
- Centre Contact
- Quality Assurance Contact
- Curriculum Development Contact(s)
- Exams Contact

* Centres are able to write their own tasks but these must be approved by Agored Cymru prior to use. Please see the [Guidance for developing Essential Skills controlled tasks](#)



Delivery of these qualifications

2.3.2. Confirmatory tests

In addition to the controlled task, Essential Application of Number Skills (EAoNS) and Essential Communication Skills (ECommS) at levels 1, 2 and 3 involve a short confirmatory test that is externally set and marked.

To meet the assessment conduct requirements for the confirmatory tests, centres must ensure that each of the following roles are undertaken:

- Head of Organisation
- Centre Contact
- Invigilator(s).

Responsibilities of the invigilator role are set out in section 4.5 of this handbook. Because of the diverse range of settings in which the Essential Skills Wales qualifications are accessed, please note that the security and conduct requirements for the confirmatory tests differ in a number of respects from the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) Instructions for Conducting Examinations (ICE).

For details of where the security and conduct arrangements for the confirmatory tests differ from JCQ ICE and/or standard examination conduct requirements, please see section 4.5 of this handbook.

2.3.3. Entry level ESW Application of Number and Communication assessments

At Entry level, Application of Number and Communication qualifications are assessed by a task, carried out under controlled conditions. The task assesses the skill standards through activities placed in familiar contexts which may be drawn from everyday life, work situations or educational settings. It should only be taken once a learner demonstrates the skills and knowledge at the required level. Learners should have the opportunity to develop, practise and apply the skills in a range of meaningful and real-life contexts before taking the assessment.

Candidates can complete the task, which must be presented as unseen, over more than one session – this would usually be no more than two consecutive sessions. No formative feedback or assessment related teaching must be provided in between sessions. The tutor/trainer or assessor can be present in a supervisory capacity though all work must be completed independently by the candidate.

For these assessments, assistance may be provided for parts of the assessment task that are not being assessed, for example: for Application of Number, the assessment task and source materials may be read to the candidate but no further clarification or explanation can be given. For Communication, for the writing, speaking and listening assessments, the activities may be read to the candidate but this assistance is not permitted for the reading part of the assessment. See assessor packs for further guidance.

For Entry level Communication qualifications, speaking and listening assessments must be attempted within four weeks of the reading and writing activities being completed.



Delivery of these qualifications

Sample tasks are available on the Agored Cymru website to help with candidate preparation and centre staff training/standardisation. These replicate the format and structure of the live controlled tasks.

2.4. Candidate entry requirements

There are no set entry requirements for these qualifications, although centres must ensure that learners have the potential and opportunity to gain any Essential Skills Wales qualifications they work towards.

Where learners are not immediately capable of achieving an Essential Skills Wales qualification, or may require further support to address specific gaps in their skills profile, the Essential Skills for Work and Life unit-based qualifications might be suitable.

2.4.1. Age restrictions

Whilst there are no formal age restrictions on registering for these qualifications, the Essential Skills Wales Application of Number and Communication qualifications at Entry level are designated by Qualifications Wales for learners over the age of 14. The Essential Skills Wales qualifications at levels 1, 2 and 3 and the EDLS and EES qualifications at all levels are intended primarily for learners over the age of 16, although may be accessed in some pre-16 contexts such as pupil referral units (PRUs).

2.4.2. Other legal considerations

Learners and centres should be aware of and comply with regulations affecting those who deal with children, young people and vulnerable adults.

All centres must comply with the terms and conditions in their Agored Cymru centre agreement.

2.4.3. Conflict of Interest

For candidates employed by the centre in a role which may have given them access to live assessment tasks and tests, the centre must complete and submit to Agored Cymru a conflict of interest form, and apply to Agored Cymru for a unique assessment task or test.



Delivery of these qualifications

3. Delivery of these qualifications

3.1. Initial assessment and induction

Learners are expected to undergo initial assessment in order to help determine the level at which they should be summatively assessed. All Welsh Government funded Essential Skills Wales providers are expected to make use of the Wales Essential Skills Toolkit (WEST) for this purpose. Where WEST is not being employed, centres should demonstrate that learners are undergoing an initial assessment which maps to the Essential Skills Wales standards.

3.2. Standards and delivery guidance

Detailed information about subject content and standards applicable to each of the Essential Skills Wales qualifications can be found in the 'Essential Skills Wales Suite, Delivery Guidance for Practitioners' document, developed for each of the four subject areas. This document sets out the range of skills, knowledge and understanding that needs to be taught and learned; it also describes the standard expected of candidates undergoing assessment in these qualifications.

It is therefore required reading for all Essential Skills tutors/teachers, assessors and internal quality assurers.

3.3. Support materials

Delivery support for these qualifications will be available in the form of guidance materials and bespoke training. Please see the Agored Cymru website or contact the Business Development team for further details.



Delivery of these qualifications

4. Assessment requirements

4.1. Overview of assessment requirements

The Essential Skills Wales suite of qualifications is designed to enable learners to develop and demonstrate an understanding of, and proficiency in, the essential skills that employers and next-stage educators value and that candidates need for progression and effective performance in learning, work and life.

Each of the Essential Skills Wales qualifications aims to:

- structure and consolidate learning, making incidental, naturally occurring, practices explicit
- encourage articulation and analysis of and reflection on the skills and on learners' own proficiency in them, in personalised terms
- increase confidence and effectiveness in the use and application of these skills
- develop an understanding of how to transfer skills to new purposes and contexts
- provide positive and engaging opportunities to further explore, develop, practise and apply the skills, in a range of meaningful and 'real-life' contexts for real-life purposes.

The assessment model for these qualifications is summative. In each case, it involves a concentrated activity **after** a period of teaching and learning.

There is no 'ongoing' portfolio-type assessment, and candidates must be supervised/invigorated throughout all formal assessment activity.

All assessment is **externally-set** by Agored Cymru. In most cases candidates' work is **internally assessed** by centres; the only exceptions to this are the confirmatory tests within Essential Application of Number Skills (EAoNS) and Essential Communication Skills (ECommS) which are externally set and marked by Agored Cymru.



Delivery of these qualifications

Assessment arrangements for each of the Essential Skills Wales qualifications are as follows:

Levels	Title	Description of assessment model	Internal vs external
Entry (1-3)	Essential Skills Wales in Application of Number	Controlled Task	Externally set, internally assessed
Entry (1-3)	Essential Skills Wales in Communication	Controlled Task	Externally set, internally assessed
Levels 1-3	Essential Application of Number Skills (EAoNS)	Controlled task and confirmatory test	Task: externally set, internally assessed Test: externally set, externally assessed
Levels 1-3	Essential Communication Skills (EComms)	Controlled task and confirmatory test	Task: externally set, internally assessed Test: externally set, externally assessed
Entry (1-3), Levels 1-3	Essential Digital Literacy Skills (EDLS)	Controlled task and confirmatory structured discussion	Externally set, internally assessed
Entry (3), Levels 1-3	Essential Employability Skills (EES)	Controlled task and confirmatory structured discussion	Externally set, internally assessed



Delivery of these qualifications

The controlled tasks, structured discussion guidance and confirmatory tests used to assess EAoNS, ECommS, EDLS and EES have been developed jointly by the Essential Skills awarding bodies. Assessment conduct requirements are likewise consistent across all awarding bodies.

Centre staff will need to ensure candidates have developed **all** of the necessary skills, knowledge and understanding before attempting live assessment. **Under no circumstances may candidates be given any formative support or feedback whilst undertaking their controlled task, structured discussion or test;** all work produced and submitted must be entirely their own.

The head of centre is ultimately responsible for ensuring the administration of all assessments follows the instructions and guidance set out in this handbook, and that all centre staff involved with the process are familiar with these requirements.

Candidates must successfully complete all parts of the required assessment for any Essential Skills Wales qualification that they attempt; there is no mechanism for awarding 'partial achievement' of any Essential Skills Wales qualification. However, for the Essential Communication Skills qualification, candidates may resit parts of the task where they were initially unsuccessful by undertaking the corresponding part within a new controlled task. Where candidates have been unsuccessful in the controlled task, they will need further support and opportunity to address any apparent gaps in their skills, knowledge and understanding before re-attempting a **different** controlled task.

The confirmatory element (i.e. structured discussion, in the case of EDLS and EES; test, in the case of EAoNS and ECommS) is designed to **confirm** the standard of work demonstrated through the controlled task, and therefore it is recommended that the controlled task is completed first.

4.2. Entry level ESW Application of Number and Communication assessment – administration and conduct arrangements

4.2.1. Controlled tasks are:

- externally set (or approved) by Agored Cymru
- presented unseen to candidates, and completed under controlled conditions (as specified in section 4.3.5, below)
- internally assessed by centres, using the supplied marking criteria
- internally quality assured by centres
- externally quality assured by Agored Cymru.



Delivery of these qualifications

4.2.2. Obtaining the controlled tasks

The tasks are available to view and download from the Agored Cymru website by authorised personnel within a centre. Centres should take care to use the latest versions of a task.

Any live controlled tasks may **only** be used for their intended purpose, i.e. to carry out live candidate assessments. Any digital or printed copies of the task documents must be held securely at all times.

On no account may learners access any live assessment material until they have been registered as a candidate for the Essential Skills Wales qualification(s) they are working towards.

Sample controlled tasks are available on the Agored Cymru website to help with candidate preparation and centre staff training/standardisation. These replicate the format and structure of the live controlled tasks.

4.2.3. Format of the controlled tasks

Each controlled task comprises at least two documents:

- Candidate's paper
 - setting out the task instructions, questions and related source material.
- Assessment pack
 - containing the marking scheme and recording sheets, along with further information for assessors and internal quality assurers about conduct requirements and the assessment process. Candidates must not be given the assessment pack.

4.2.4. Assessment scheduling: working time allowance, maximum working period and research parameters

Application of Number and Communication qualifications at entry level are not limited by the number of hours allowed to complete the task, however, with communication, the speaking and listening activities should be attempted within four weeks of completing the reading and writing activities.

4.3. Controlled tasks – administration and conduct arrangements

This instructions and guidance in this section should be read in conjunction with the relevant controlled task candidate and assessment packs.

4.3.1. Controlled tasks are:

- externally set (or approved) by Agored Cymru
- presented unseen to candidates, and completed under controlled conditions (as specified in section 4.3.4.)
- internally assessed by centres, using the supplied marking criteria
- internally quality assured by centres



Delivery of these qualifications

- externally quality assured by Agored Cymru.

4.3.2. Obtaining the controlled tasks

Candidates should be registered by one of the standard methods, details of which are available on the [Learner Registration](#) page of the Agored Cymru website. The specific qualification required (subject and level) and the units should be included. **NB The term unit in these qualifications represents the assessment components, controlled task and confirmatory test** (in the case of EAoNS and ECommS). Once learners have been correctly registered, their details will be transferred to the assessment platform, XAMS (agored.xams.co.uk) and centres will be notified. At this point, centres can schedule the appropriate assessments for each candidate. The assessments available will be based on the qualification and units registered.

Controlled tasks are available on the Agored Cymru website to specific roles in an organisation.

Any live controlled tasks may only be used for their intended purpose, i.e. to carry out live candidate assessments. Any digital or printed copies of the task documents must be held securely at all times.

On no account may learners access any live assessment material until they have been registered as a candidate for the Essential Skills Wales qualification(s) they are working towards.

Each controlled task is based on a given theme or context, with centres able to choose from the range of available topics. Centres should ensure any topic(s) they select are appropriate for, and likely to engage, their learners; however, they must not give candidates:

- prior sight of the controlled task
- any detailed information about the task topic/context (general advice, e.g. whether the topic relates to something they might encounter within their vocational programme or job role, is acceptable)
- any coaching or specific 'hints' about what may come up in the controlled task.

The range of controlled tasks available for use at any one time will vary, and the task documents will be updated periodically. **Centres must therefore always ensure that they are working from the latest versions, and that the particular controlled task they intend to use is still available.**



Delivery of these qualifications

Sample controlled tasks are available to help with candidate preparation and centre staff training/standardisation.

- Essential Application of Number
- Essential Communication
- Essential Digital Literacy
- Essential Employability

These replicate the format and structure of the live controlled tasks.

4.3.3. [Format of the controlled tasks](#)

The controlled task for EDLS and EES comprises at least two documents:

Candidate's paper setting out the task instructions, questions and related information

Assessment pack containing the marking criteria and recording sheets, along with further information for assessors and internal quality assurers about conduct requirements and the assessment process.

The controlled task for EAoNS has a separate record sheet which should be used to record marks awarded and rationales for assessment decisions made.

The ECommS controlled task has an additional speaking and listening record sheet which must also be completed for each candidate.

Centres must ensure that they have obtained **all** of the documents relating to any controlled tasks they use. Candidates must **not** be given the assessment pack.



Delivery of these qualifications

4.3.4. Assessment scheduling: working time allowance, maximum working period and research parameters

Controlled tasks should only be attempted after candidates have undergone a period of learning, once the centre is satisfied that they are ready for assessment.

Each controlled task is a substantial and holistic set of activities that will take a number of hours to complete. There is a maximum amount of time they are permitted to spend working on their controlled task¹, known as the **working time allowance**. The allowance in each case is:

Level	Working time allowance
Entry level AoN and Communication	No time restriction (speaking and listening activities must be attempted within four weeks of completion of reading and writing activities).
Entry (EDLS and EES only)	up to 6 hours
Level 1	up to 4 hours
Level 2	up to 5 hours
Level 3	up to 8 hours

Candidates must not exceed their working time allowance (unless permission for additional time has been granted as a reasonable adjustment – see Section 4.6.). It is therefore important that they are taught to manage their time carefully.

Candidates must be supervised **throughout** their time working on the controlled task. They are not expected to complete the whole controlled task in one session.

Centres must:

- plan in advance when each controlled task session will take place
- keep a record of the date, time and duration of each session (the front cover of each candidate's paper includes space for this)
- ensure sessions take place as close together as possible

¹ In some cases candidates will be expected to carry out additional supervised research; this does not count towards the working time allowance, although must be carried out within the maximum working period (see section 4.3.8, below).



Delivery of these qualifications

- **plan for a time period of no more than eight weeks** between the beginning of the first session and the end of the final session, known as the **maximum working period** (sometimes described as the 'eight week rule').

Applying the 'eight week rule'

For the avoidance of doubt, centres 'normal academic holiday periods and valid learner absence (e.g. through illness or incapacity) may be disregarded when calculating the maximum working period.

Best practice - longer sessions planned as close together as possible allowing candidates to complete the assessments well within the maximum period.

Centres' assessment planning, including their application of the maximum working period, will be scrutinised as part of the external quality assurance process.

- **All work is collected in and stored securely between sessions.**

Candidates are not permitted to access the candidate's paper, supplied source material, or any of the work they have already done between sessions; they also must not bring in any additional work completed outside of the controlled environment. Centres should take particular care with any work stored in digital form to ensure candidates do not access it remotely between sessions (e.g. by checking files have not been accessed or updated).

- **Sessions are not interspersed by any further teaching of the subject.**

There must **not** be any formative assessment or feedback given to candidates between sessions. Assessors may **only** mark work once the whole task has been completed, or once the candidate's maximum working time allowance has been used up.

NB: unrelated teaching, learning and assessment associated with other subjects may still take place between sessions.

The controlled task must be presented unseen; the first time candidates are permitted to see the candidate's paper and supplied source material is at the **beginning of the first session when they start working** on the controlled task. From that moment, their working time allowance begins and all of their time spent with access to the task materials must be monitored and supervised.



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4.3.5. Assessment location and environment

All controlled tasks must be completed under **controlled conditions**. These are distinct from traditional 'examination' conditions, and it is recognised controlled tasks will take place in a range of settings such as workplaces and community halls, as well as classrooms.

In all cases, candidates must be provided with an environment that enables them to work effectively and access the range of equipment they would routinely expect to use whilst working on a task of this nature. Candidates must be able to devote their full attention to the controlled task, so the location used must be free from disturbance or interruption.

4.3.6. Supervision requirements

Candidates must be supervised **throughout** the time that they have access to any live controlled task assessment material. This includes any time spent actively working on the controlled task, as well as any instances where candidates are expected to carry out additional supervised research (see section 4.3.9.).

Controlled task supervisors must be reliable and responsible people who have been suitably briefed. They are accountable to the head of centre for ensuring adequate supervision and control of the assessment environment is maintained. At least one supervisor must be present **at all times**, to ensure:

- the relevant working time allowance and maximum working period are not exceeded²
- each candidate produces all work independently.

It is likely that controlled task supervisors will also perform other roles within the centre (e.g. tutor/trainer, assessor or internal quality assurer). Whilst supervisors need to appreciate how this role differs from others they might perform, in principle there is no reason why controlled tasks cannot be supervised by candidates' tutor, trainer or assessor³.

²Unless additional working time has been granted as a reasonable adjustment (see Section 4.6, or if an exceptional and unforeseen event has made it necessary to exceed the maximum working time to be exceeded (see Section 4.3.4).

³NB: an assessor will need to be present for the speaking and listening activities within the ECommS controlled tasks.



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4.3.7. Permitted equipment and resources

Controlled tasks are designed to assess purposeful **transfer** and **application** of the relevant essential skills. To assist with this process, candidates can access a range of routine equipment and resources that might typically be available to them in a 'real life' situation. These might include, but are not limited to:

- PCs/laptops/tablets/smartphones
- paper or electronic dictionaries spelling/grammar checking software
- calculators
- general reference material (**not** course or qualification-specific textbooks) relevant class or course notes (as long as these do not contain any specific guidance on completing the controlled task)
- online resources (where openly available and sourced independently by the candidate).

Candidates are **not** permitted to take into the assessment environment any materials designed *specifically* to assist with the assessment. These might include:

- planning templates
- guides or checklists for completing controlled tasks
- sample controlled tasks (completed or not completed).

All such material, if included in class or course notes, must be removed by the candidate's tutor/trainer and/or assessor before being taken into the controlled environment.

Whilst access to the internet is allowed, controlled task supervisors must ensure that this is done appropriately. This might include, but is not limited to:

- ensuring candidates do not access any sample controlled tasks (candidate papers or assessment packs containing the mark scheme)
- plagiarise information found on a website
- collude with a third party in order to complete the assessment.

Supervisors must also ensure that candidates' internet activity remains focused on the controlled task.

Candidates will need to have access to any material gathered during supervised research where the controlled task is completed over a number of sessions (see section 4.3.9.). They must **not** access or bring in any other material that has been gathered or generated outside the controlled environment, although photographs or other images taken to include in final tasks are permissible. However, please note candidates cannot bring in copyrighted images taken directly from websites or other sources. Centres must be fully aware of this and ensure images used are solely the candidate's own.



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Centre's internal quality assurance processes must take into account any potential risks surrounding the assessment process. This includes, but is not limited to:

- ensuring that candidates can only access routine equipment and resources
- removing materials designed specifically to assist with the assessment from any class or course notes before the candidate enters the controlled environment
- collecting and securely storing candidates' papers and materials produced during the session.

Particular care is needed around the use of digital devices with transmitting/receiving capabilities (e.g. smartphones, tablets, smart watches); depending on local circumstances, it might be appropriate for centres to operate tighter restrictions than those described here – as long as this will not impede candidates from completing the controlled task successfully.

Centres must ensure that any work produced or shared online whilst completing a controlled task (e.g. the footprint from digital collaboration) is not left publicly accessible afterwards.

As part of the external quality assurance process, Agored Cymru will monitor the centre's conduct of these assessments. This might include site visits to check how candidates' access to permitted equipment and resources is managed.

4.3.8. Assistance with controlled tasks

Candidates must be able to complete any controlled tasks they attempt independently, and are not permitted third party 'human' assistance with anything material to the assessment.

Candidates may be supported with aspects of the assessment process that are not material to the assessment itself. For example, it would potentially be acceptable for supervisors to:

- read out information on task instructions page
- read out the contents of the task (except in the case of ECommS where reading forms part of the assessment)
- accept verbal responses in lieu of written ones (except in the case of ECommS where writing forms part of the assessment).



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Please also refer to Section 4.6 of this handbook for further information about the scope of any reasonable adjustments permitted.

Whilst the task instructions may be repeated or reiterated to candidates whilst they are working on their controlled task, they must not be given any formative feedback or other advice about the **content** of the assessment whilst working on the controlled task.

For example, it would be acceptable for a supervisor to remind candidates completing an ECommS controlled task that they are being assessed on the accuracy of their spelling, punctuation and grammar; it would **not** be appropriate for a supervisor to suggest to individual candidates that they should review their spelling, punctuation and grammar accuracy.

The candidate, assessor and internal quality assurer declarations contained within the candidate pack and assessment pack must be completed, as instructed, to confirm the authenticity of any work presented for assessment.

4.3.9. Additional independent research

Whilst candidates are supplied with most of the source material they need to complete the controlled task, in some cases the task might require them to carry out some additional **supervised** research. Where this is the case, it will be noted on both the candidate pack and assessment pack.

Whilst candidates must be supervised whilst carrying out any expected research, time spent on this does **not** count towards the working time allowance. Nevertheless, since the research relates directly to the task activities, it will need to be fitted around the planned task sessions and must therefore take place within the maximum working period.



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Whilst not required, it is recognised that some candidates may wish to carry out further background research between task sessions. It would be neither practical nor desirable to prevent them from doing so, although they must understand that they **cannot** bring in any notes or other outputs from work completed outside of the supervised environment. Likewise, they must not access the assessment documents, or any of the work they have already done, outside of the supervised controlled task sessions.

4.3.10. Collaboration

Whilst the controlled tasks are designed to measure an individual learner's capabilities, in a few cases (within EDLS and EES, as well as the speaking and listening part of ECommS) candidates are required to work collaboratively.

In most settings this is likely to involve working with other candidates, although it could potentially involve other individuals if appropriately briefed. In such situations, it might be necessary to give the other participants access to the controlled task candidate's paper and source materials, although this must be on a strictly confidential basis, and under no circumstances may they retain copies of any live assessment material.

Where candidates are required to collaborate, controlled task supervisors and assessors must ensure that they are able to discern each individual candidate's contribution. They must also remain alert to the possibility of collusion; any potential instances of collusion must be investigated and action taken in accordance with our guidance on candidate malpractice. Please see Section 6 for further information about dealing with cases of suspected malpractice.

4.3.11. Resits

All controlled tasks are graded pass/fail, and where candidates have been unsuccessful they can resit using a **different** controlled task from the range of available controlled task topics.

Whilst there is no fixed minimum period before a resit may take place, nor a cap on the number of permitted resits, in practice candidates will need further opportunity to develop and practise the relevant skills before resitting. As part of the external quality assurance process, Agored Cymru will be monitoring the number of instances where resits are required.

On no account may candidates attempt the same controlled task more than once. Candidates who are unsuccessful in one or two parts of the ECommS controlled task do not have to resit parts of the task that were successful. For example, a candidate at level 2 or level 3 who successfully completed the presentation part of the task will not be required to do the presentation section of the resit task.



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The maximum time allowed for partial resits for Essential Communication Skills are detailed in the table below:

Time Allocations for Essential Communication Skills Controlled Tasks

Level	Part 1	Part 2	Part 3
Level 1	Reading, Discussion and Writing	Reading and Writing	
	2 hours 30 mins	1 hour 30 mins	
	Reading, Discussion and Writing	Writing	Presentation
Level 2	2 hours 45 mins	1 hour 30 mins	45 mins
Level 3	4 hours 30 mins	2 hours 30 mins	1 hour

The resit tasks should be completed within the 8 week period as described in 4.3.4

For EAoNS, EES and EDLS, all candidates who are resitting must complete **the entire** controlled task, including any activities or sections where they were successful in the equivalent part of the other controlled task on the previous occasion.

4.4. Confirmatory structured discussion – administration and conduct arrangements

The instructions and guidance in this section should be read in conjunction with the specific structured discussion guidance contained within the relevant EDLS or EES controlled task assessment packs.

4.4.1. Format and purpose of the structured discussion

A structured discussion is a conversation between the candidate and their assessor, conducted either one-to-one or in small groups (with a maximum of five candidates). It is intended to complement the controlled task and confirm the candidate's knowledge and understanding, as well as providing opportunity for the candidate to reflect on the controlled task they have recently completed.

Since the structured discussion relates to the controlled task the candidate has just completed, in practice it cannot be conducted until after the controlled task, and for assessment purposes there is no need for it to take place if the candidate has not achieved a pass in the controlled task.

Unlike the controlled task, the structured discussion is not formally time-bound, as it is separate from the controlled task and does not count towards candidates' working time allowance. However, a structured discussion should not last for longer than around 30 minutes and centres must maintain records to justify any longer duration for quality assurance purposes.

Whilst the structured discussion should take place as soon as possible after the controlled task has been completed and assessed (whilst still fresh in the candidate's memory), this does not have to be within the controlled task's maximum working period.



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4.4.2. Conducting the structured discussion

The structured discussion should take place in a location where the assessor and candidate(s) are able to have a one-to-one conversation or group discussion without disturbance or interruption. This might include suitable rooms within for example a workplace, community setting or school/college.

Candidates are expected to spend at least some time preparing for their structured discussion, although this should not involve a substantial period of revision, nor should it extend to producing scripted statements for use during the discussion.

Candidates must not have unsupervised access to their completed controlled task. However, whilst **preparing** for their structured discussion they may be given copies of the **relevant page** from the controlled task candidate's paper that advises them how to prepare for the structured discussion.

The controlled task assessment pack includes guidance for the assessor on conducting the structured discussion, including the mark scheme that must be completed to record the assessment decision (see section 4.4.3). The discussion is supposed to be a conversation, so should not be simply a question and answer session. Where more than one candidate is involved in the discussion, the contribution of each candidate must be assessed individually.

4.4.3. Evidencing the discussion

The completed mark scheme is the formal record of the structured discussion having taken place, so **must** in all cases be completed. This must include details of the location, date, time started and completed, people present and the outcome achieved. However, for standardisation purposes, it is crucial that each assessor's structured discussions are corroborated in some way. This could be through one or more of the following:

- video recording
- audio recording
- contemporaneous notes by assessor
- preparation/contemporaneous notes by candidate
- internal quality assurer observation.

Where video/audio recording or observation are used, it is important to ensure this happens as unobtrusively as possible so that it does not impede or detract from the discussion.

4.4.4. Resitting the structured discussion

It is important to appreciate that the structured discussion is intended to confirm the standard of work the candidate has already demonstrated through the controlled task. Whilst it has a mark scheme and is therefore technically possible to 'fail', in practice it is acceptable to reconvene the discussion if necessary in order to give the candidate another opportunity.



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4.5. Confirmatory test – administration and conduct arrangements

The confirmatory tests for EAoNS and ECommS at levels 1 to 3 perform a similar function to the structured discussions within EDLS and EES. The tests are designed to **confirm** the standard of work that has been demonstrated through the controlled task and therefore it is recommended that the controlled task is completed first.

4.5.1. Format of the confirmatory tests

The confirmatory tests are externally set and are externally marked. They follow a common multiple choice format across all of the Essential Skills awarding bodies, structured as follows:

Test	Number of questions	Maximum duration
Level 1 Essential Application of Number Skills	20	30 minutes
Level 2 Essential Application of Number Skills	20	45 minutes
Level 3 Essential Application of Number Skills	30	60 minutes
Level 1 Essential Communication Skills	20	30 minutes
Level 2 Essential Communication Skills	20	45 minutes
Level 3 Essential Communication Skills	30	60 minutes

Each test must be completed in one session, with no breaks permitted (unless authorised by Agored Cymru for individual candidates as a reasonable adjustment for Access reasons, see Section 4.6). The candidate must independently determine responses to every question.

Each test is graded pass/fail, with the pass mark intended to be approximately 70%.

Agored Cymru makes the confirmatory tests available through the XAMS assessment platform at agored.xams.co.uk as online digital assessments. In addition, a digital version will be available for printing when it is not possible for a learner to sit the online assessment.



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4.5.2. Ordering the confirmatory tests

The confirmatory test will be available:

- online
- paper based either downloaded from the Agored Cymru secure file transfer or sent by post on request.

Each confirmatory test must be booked at least two weeks in advance on the XAMS platform, see section 4.3.2. At this point, centres will need to indicate the assessment site.

The test paper will be allocated to each candidate by Agored Cymru. Unlike the controlled tasks, centres are unable to choose a particular test paper or range of topics for their candidates. This is because Essential Skills Wales qualifications are intended to assess learners' ability to transfer their application of these skills between contexts and purposes.

Where a candidate requires additional time for a test, centres will need to indicate this when creating the test schedule. Centres must have completed a reasonable adjustment request form and have had this approved prior to scheduling. See section 4.6

4.5.3. Test conduct requirements

The confirmatory tests require a more formal 'exam' environment than the controlled tasks, although it is recognised that Essential Skills Wales qualifications are accessed in a diverse range of settings where some of the more rigid security and conduct requirements of the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) Instructions for Conducting Examinations (ICE) might be impractical or inappropriate.

The confirmatory tests are therefore not formally subject to JCQ ICE conditions, although most of the principles of ICE do apply. The required conditions are as set out below:

4.5.3.1. Test sites

Confirmatory tests should ideally be completed on the centre's own premises, although where they do need to take place in other locations, such as candidates' workplaces or community settings, Agored Cymru must be informed of where the assessment is taking place and that it is fit for purpose.

If confirmatory tests have been scheduled on any particular site, and are then cancelled for any reason, the centre must inform Agored Cymru promptly (CentreSupportCoordinators@agored.cymru). A representative from Agored Cymru will attend scheduled tests from time to time for quality assurance purposes. Therefore, notification of a cancelled test should be provided at least one working day in advance of the scheduled date and time.



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4.5.3.2. Receiving and storing test materials

Paper based test papers should not be downloaded more than 24 hours ahead of the candidate sitting the paper. They should be stored securely at all times.

If the papers are received by post, they will be supplied in sealed packets that must be stored securely and **not opened until immediately before use** – ideally in front of candidates once they are in the test room, although if not, no more than one hour before the test is due to start⁴.

Whilst these tests are not formally subject to the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) Instructions for Conducting Examinations (ICE), storage arrangements must involve similar access control arrangements to ICE.

Live tests must not be viewed by anyone within the centre prior to their use, and any access to the papers must be restricted to a limited number of individuals authorised by the head of centre. Particular care must be taken if any test papers need to be transported to another site (see 5.5.4). Where possible, this should be on the day of the assessment using a lockable case. If assessment materials need to be stored overnight away from the centre address, the conditions must meet those listed above, with the location known to Agored Cymru. All assessment sites' storage arrangements will be checked as part of Agored Cymru's examination audit process.

For those learners doing the online test, once the schedule is created, the centre is able to access login sheets for the group of learners on the schedule. Login sheets include a unique username and password per learner, which allows them to access the system, and a password for the test itself. Once a learner has logged into the system they will be able to access the test only with the correct test password and during the time window indicated on the schedule.

4.5.3.3. Test room

All confirmatory tests must take place in a suitable location that enables candidates to complete their assessments without disruption or interruption. It should be made clear to those in adjoining rooms/corridors that the test is taking place.

Candidates must not be seated in such a way that they can overlook each other's work (even unintentionally). The recommended method is to ensure that the minimum distance in all directions between candidates' chairs is at least 1.25 metres. Other approaches are acceptable, for example screening, providing that candidates cannot see each other's work so long as the invigilator can clearly observe each candidate working.

⁴Unless longer is required to make specific adjustments to a paper where a reasonable adjustment has been approved – see Section 4.6 of this handbook.



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Centres must create a seating plan so that there is a clear record of where each candidate was seated during the assessment. Centres must keep a copy of the seating plan until at least 65 working days after the release of results.

Care should be taken to ensure there is nothing visible in the test room that might give candidates an unfair advantage (see 5.5.9 for further guidance).

A reliable clock must be clearly visible to each candidate throughout the assessment.

When completing the paper based versions, candidates must ensure their responses are clear. Where responses are not clear the answers will be marked as incorrect.

4.5.3.4. The invigilator role

The confirmatory tests require **continuous** supervision by suitably informed and briefed adults. Anyone acting as an invigilator for these tests needs to be absolutely clear about the scope and purpose of this role, i.e. to facilitate the assessment and:

- ensure all candidates have an equal opportunity to demonstrate their abilities
- ensure the security of the assessment – before, during and afterwards
- prevent possible candidate malpractice
- prevent possible administrative failures.

Invigilators must:

- be familiar with the requirements of the role as set out in this handbook. A digital or printed copy of this handbook (or at least this section of it) must be available during every test sitting
- give all their attention to overseeing the test and ensuring it is conducted properly
- be able to observe each candidate that they are responsible for supervising at all times
- be able to summon help without leaving candidates unsupervised at any time – e.g. if there is only one invigilator, that person should have access to a mobile phone (on silent) or two-way radio
- inform the head of centre (or other person in authority within the centre) immediately if they suspect the security of the assessment may have been compromised (the head of centre is responsible for notifying Agored Cymru of any security breach).

Invigilators must not carry out any other task whilst invigilating.



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Who can act as invigilator?

Whilst invigilators must be suitably informed and briefed, determining who can or cannot fulfil the invigilator role is ultimately an internal staffing matter for centres.

As with any form of assessment, centres must consider the potential for any malpractice that could occur and ensure that there are adequate internal safeguards in place to mitigate the risk of this happening.

Particular care needs to be taken if an invigilator might be perceived to have a conflict of interest as a result of other roles they perform. As far as possible centres should avoid situations where candidates are invigilated solely by the main tutor/trainer/assessor who has prepared them for the essential skill being assessed. Where this is genuinely unavoidable, the centre must take all reasonable steps to prevent any conflict of interest which could lead to, or be perceived as, malpractice. Candidates' relatives or peers must not act as sole invigilator under any circumstances.

If only one invigilator is present, that person must be able to get help easily, without leaving the room or disturbing the candidates. **There must be at least one invigilator present at all times during the test.**

4.5.3.5. Permitted and prohibited equipment

Unlike the controlled tasks, there are strict limits on the range of equipment candidates may access and use whilst completing their confirmatory test. This is deliberate, and reflects the confirmatory purpose of these tests.

In each case, the front cover of the test paper or on-screen instructions lists the range of items candidates may or may not use. In particular, candidates must not have access to:

- a calculator (of any kind) in the case of EAoNS
- a dictionary (of any kind) in the case of ECommS.

Care must also be taken to ensure there are no posters or similar visible in the test room that might conceivably give candidates an unfair advantage (e.g. number charts, word/spelling lists).

4.5.3.6. After the test

Tests carried out online will be marked automatically and centres notified of the results immediately. Where tests have not been carried out online, all test papers and related material must be collected in as soon as the test has finished. Completed answer grids must be uploaded via the Secure File Transfer area of the Agored Cymru website for marking within one working day.



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If answer grids are to be returned by post recorded delivery should be used. Centres will be notified of the results within 3 working days of receipt of the answer grids.

The test papers remain live assessment material, even after they have been taken, so all copies must be destroyed or returned to Agored Cymru after use. On no account may they be retained for use as practice or 'past' papers. A separate set of sample tests is available for this purpose.

- Essential Application of Number
- Essential Communication

4.5.4. Resits

All confirmatory tests are graded pass/fail, and where candidates have been unsuccessful they can resit.

Whilst there is no fixed minimum period before a resit may take place, or a cap on the number of permitted resits, in practice candidates will need further opportunity to reflect on their reasons for being unsuccessful before resitting. As part of the external quality assurance process, Agored Cymru will monitor the number of instances where resits are required.

Where candidates do need to resit, the test paper will again be allocated by Agored Cymru rather than the centre, and is most likely to be a different test from the one attempted previously.

4.6. Access arrangements and reasonable adjustments

The Essential Skills Wales qualifications are designed to measure learners' ability to work independently and problem-solve. It is therefore crucial that they undergo a rigorous process of initial assessment to ensure they are personally capable of meeting the required standard for any Essential Skills Wales qualification they work towards.

4.6.1. Permitted adjustments

The qualifications' assessments are designed to be inclusive and reflect common variations in learners' normal methods of working, although some candidates may still need specific access arrangements and reasonable adjustments to allow for their particular methods of working. **Any such adjustments must not compromise independent achievement of the required standard, so must not involve third party assistance with anything material to the assessment.**



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Adjustments may be allowed, where necessary, for any Essential Skills Wales qualification and can apply to controlled tasks, structured discussions and confirmatory tests.

The following inclusion statements set out the range of reasonable adjustments that might **potentially** be considered for both the controlled task and confirmatory test.

Essential Application of Number Skills		
Adjustment/allowances	Permitted for controlled task	Permitted for confirmatory test
Additional time	Yes	Yes
Human reader	Yes	Yes
Human scribe	Yes (but must not draw diagrams, charts or graphs on behalf of candidate)	Yes
Assistive reading/writing software	Yes	Yes
Practical assistants	Yes (the assistant must not perform any skills for which marks can be accredited)	Yes
Rest breaks	Yes (but must not assist candidate with anything material to the assessment)	Yes
Modified paper (e.g. enlarged print or Braille)	Yes	Yes
BSL interpreter	Yes	Yes
Transcripts	Yes (although any diagrams, charts or graphs must be created independently by the candidate)	Yes



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Essential Communication Skills

Key principles:

Speaking and Listening

Speaking and listening is defined as non-written communication conducted within a purposeful context.

Reading

Reading is defined as the independent decoding and understanding of written language to obtain information in a purposeful context. 'Text' is defined as materials that include the use of words that are written, printed, on screen or presented using Braille.

Writing

Writing is defined as the independent construction of written text to communicate in a purposeful context. 'Text' is defined as materials that include the use of words that are written, printed, on screen or presented using Braille and which are presented in a way that is accessible for the intended audience.



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Essential Communication Skills		
Adjustment/allowances	Permitted for controlled task	Permitted for confirmatory test
Additional time	Yes	Yes
Interaction through the medium of BSL or SSE	Yes (only for speaking and listening, all reading/writing activities must be completed through the medium of English or Welsh)	No
Human reader	No	No
Human scribe	No	Yes – to record multiple choice responses
Assistive reading/writing/speech software (if used independently by the candidate)	Yes	Yes
Practical assistants	Yes (but must not assist candidate with anything material to the assessment)	Yes
Adjustment/allowances	Permitted for controlled task	Permitted for confirmatory test
Rest breaks	Yes (although tasks can in any event take place over a number of sessions)	Yes
Modified paper (e.g. enlarged print or Braille)	Yes	Yes
Transcripts	Yes (although any text must be created independently by the candidate)	Yes



Delivery of these qualifications

Essential Digital Literacy Skills		
Adjustment/allowances	Permitted for controlled task	Permitted for confirmatory structured discussion
Additional time	Yes	Yes
Human reader	Yes	Yes
Human scribe	Yes (although any digital equipment/devices must be operated independently by the candidate)	Yes
Assistive reading/writing software	Yes	Yes
Practical assistants	Yes (the assistant must not perform any skills for which marks can be accredited)	Yes
Rest breaks	Yes (although tasks can in any event take place over a number of sessions)	Yes
Modified paper (e.g. enlarged print or Braille)	Yes	Yes
BSL interpreter	Yes	Yes
Transcripts	Yes (although any outputs must be created independently by the candidate)	Yes



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Essential Employability Skills		
Adjustment/allowances	Permitted for controlled task	Permitted for confirmatory structured discussion
Additional time	Yes	Yes
Human reader	Yes	Yes
Human scribe	Yes	Yes
Assistive reading/writing software	Yes	Yes
Practical assistants	Yes (the assistant must not perform any skills for which marks can be accredited)	Yes
Rest breaks	Yes (although tasks can in any event take place over a number of sessions)	Yes
Modified paper (e.g. enlarged print or Braille)	Yes	Yes
BSL interpreter	Yes	Yes
Transcripts	Yes (although any outputs must be created independently by the candidate)	Yes

4.6.2. Arrangements for making reasonable adjustments

The Agored Cymru existing published arrangements for providing access to assessment and making reasonable adjustments apply. For example, these might include presenting the task materials in a particular format, allowing additional time or practical help with aspects of the task that are not part of, or intrinsic to, the assessment. See the Agored Cymru Reasonable Adjustment to Assessment Policy and Procedure for further information.

Where a centre feels that an adjustment is required for a specific candidate, the Reasonable Adjustment to Assessment Policy and Procedure provides guidance. Form (RA1), which can be found in the policy document, must be completed and submitted to



Delivery of these qualifications

Agored Cymru for approval prior to the learner undergoing any part of the Essential Skills Wales qualification assessment.



Quality assurance requirements

5. Quality assurance requirements

5.1. Internal quality assurance

Centres must have effective internal quality assurance systems and processes in place to ensure any internal assessment of these qualifications is consistently carried out to the required standard.

Centres internal quality assurance arrangements are in turn subject to external quality assurance monitoring by Agored Cymru.

Agored Cymru guidance relating to assessment and internal quality assurance is available on the Agored Cymru website as follows:

- Assessment guidance and requirements available [here](#)
- Internal quality assurance guidance and requirements available [here](#).

5.2. External quality assurance

Once a centre has been approved to deliver the ESW qualifications, risk based external quality assurance (EQA) will be carried out to ensure compliance with Agored Cymru requirements, and consistency of approach and fairness within assessment.

Further information about EQA can be found on the [Agored Cymru website](#).



Dealing with suspected malpractice

6. Dealing with suspected malpractice

6.1. Candidate malpractice

Malpractice can take many forms and can be identified through a variety of methods including external quality assurance, internal quality assurance and complaints. Agored Cymru takes any form of malpractice seriously and will take prompt action to investigate any potential case. A policy that includes further details of malpractice, including an investigation procedure is available on the [Agored Cymru website](#).

6.2. Centre malpractice

Centre malpractice and maladministration once identified is investigated in accordance with the [Agored Cymru Malpractice and Maladministration policy](#).



Appendix 1

Appendix 1: Frequently asked questions

1. What does the term 'controlled' mean in relation to the controlled tasks?

Please see **Section 4.3** of this handbook for a detailed overview of the expectations and requirements.

2. Who can supervise the controlled task; can this be the candidate's tutor or assessor?

Please see **Section 4.3.5** of this handbook for details of supervision requirements, the role of controlled task supervisor, and who may perform it.

3. Who can invigilate the confirmatory tests; can this be the candidate's tutor or assessor?

Please see **Section 4.5.3.4** of this handbook for details of the invigilator role and who may perform it.

4. Do the confirmatory tests have to be completed within a specific timescale?

The confirmatory tests do not need to be completed within the controlled task maximum working period. See **Section 4.5** of this handbook for details.

5. Can candidates be allowed additional time for their controlled task and/or confirmatory test?

Time allowances are an important aspect of the Essential Skills qualifications' revised assessment approach. Both the controlled tasks and confirmatory tests are a concentrated activity (with a 'deadline', like many of the activities learners are likely to encounter in the workplace).

Nevertheless, individual candidates with a specific disability likely to affect their pace of work can potentially be allowed additional time as a reasonable adjustment. Please see **Section 4.6** for further details.



Appendix 1

6. At what point does the working time allowance for the controlled tasks begin?

Please see **Section 4.3.3.**

7. Can controlled task materials be issued to candidates before they start on the task?

No. Please see **Section 4.3.3.**

8. What arrangements can be made for candidates with specific learning needs and/or assessment requirements?

Please see **Section 4.6.**

9. Getting a group together to complete the speaking and listening discussions within the ECommS controlled tasks is likely to be an issue for work-based candidates. As an alternative, could their colleagues make up the group?

Please see **Section 4.3.9.** The group must comprise at least three people (excluding the assessor) although these need not all be candidates, as long as those who are undergoing assessment have the opportunity to meet the relevant assessment criteria.

10. Can the plan for the discussion in the ECommS controlled tasks also be the basis of the plan for the written piece?

Yes.

11. Does time spent collecting data within the EAoNS controlled tasks count towards the working times allowance and/or maximum working period?

Please see **Section 4.3.8.**

12. Can the structured discussion be used to compensate for shortcomings in a candidate's work during the controlled task?

Please see **section 4.4.1**

13. Can candidates have access to plain paper and a pen or pencil whilst completing the confirmatory tests?

Please see **section 4.5.3.5**



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