



HANDBOOK

Version 1.7 January 2026

ESSENTIAL SKILLS WALES

suite of qualifications

This Qualifications Wales regulated qualification is not available to centres in England.

Qualification Information

Date	Edition
January 2027	Seventh edition

Subject area	Essential skills
Age groups approved	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 submit a 'Qualification Approval Form'
Support materials	See section 3.3
Registration and certification	Candidates should be registered once they are ready to begin the Controlled Task

Title and Level	Qualification Number
Essential Communication Skills (ECommS)	
Entry Level Essential Skills Wales in Communication (Entry 1)	500/8935/3
Entry Level Essential Skills Wales in Communication (Entry 2)	500/8932/8
Entry Level Essential Skills Wales in Communication (Entry 3)	500/8929/8
Level 1 Essential Communication Skills	601/6859/6
Level 2 Essential Communication Skills	601/6860/2
Level 3 Essential Communication Skills	601/6861/4

Title and Level	Qualification Number
Essential Application of Number Skills (EAoNS)	
Entry Level Essential Skills Wales in Application of Number (Entry 1)	500/8936/5
Entry Level Essential Skills Wales in Application of Number (Entry 2)	500/8934/1
Entry Level Essential Skills Wales in Application of Number (Entry 3)	500/8937/7
Level 1 Essential Application of Number Skills	601/6852/3
Level 2 Essential Application of Number Skills	601/6857/2
Level 3 Essential Application of Number Skills	601/6858/4

Title and Level	Qualification Number
Essential Digital Literacy Skills (EDLS)	
Entry Level Essential Digital Literacy Skills (Entry 1)	601/6797/X
Entry Level Essential Digital Literacy Skills (Entry 2)	601/6798/1
Entry Level Essential Digital Literacy Skills (Entry 3)	601/6799/3
Level 1 Essential Digital Literacy Skills	601/6850/X
Level 2 Essential Digital Literacy Skills	601/6851/1
Level 3 Essential Digital Literacy Skills	601/6862/6

Title and Level	Qualification Number
Essential Employability Skills (EES)	
Entry Level Essential Employability Skills (Entry 3)	601/6867/5
Level 1 Essential Employability Skills	601/6869/9
Level 2 Essential Employability Skills	601/6871/7
Level 3 Essential Employability Skills	601/6875/4

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1. Introduction

The Essential Skills Wales 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)

The Essential Skills 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' documents developed by ColegauCymru/CollegesWales, please note that for assessment and qualification achievement purposes any requirements in **this** handbook take precedence.

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' documents developed by ColegauCymru/CollegesWales.

The qualifications' assessments in each case reflect these standards.

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 this version, these were:

- 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**.

Key features of Essential Skills

Essential Application of Number Skills (EAoNS) is about learners demonstrating skills in:

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

in order to tackle problems or tasks that are met in education, training, work or social roles.

Essential Communication Skills (ECommS) are about candidates demonstrating their skills in:

- Speaking and listening
- Reading
- Writing.

Essential Digital Literacy Skills (EDLS) are about candidates demonstrating their skills in in:

- Digital Responsibility
- Digital Productivity
- Digital Information Literacy
- Digital Collaboration
- Digital Creativity.

Essential Employability Skills (EES) involve candidates demonstrating their skills in:

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

Application of Number, Communication, Digital Literacy and Essential Employability Skills are each stand-alone qualifications available post-16 (and post-14 in certain instances).

Qualification structure and content

The Essential Skills Wales suite of qualifications is based on design principles that were developed by the Welsh Government following the 2012 Review of Qualifications, published by Qualifications Wales in 2015 and updated in 2023. 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.

ESW Entry 1-3 Application of Number and ESW Entry Communication 1-3

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, is set out in the Essential Skills suite standards and delivery guidance. The qualifications' assessments in each case reflect these standards.

Requirements for certification

With the exception of the Entry level Essential Skills Wales in Application of Number and Communication qualifications, all Essential Skills 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.

Guided learning hours (GLH) and total qualification time (TQT)

Each qualification has been allocated a number of guided learning hours (GLH). This is the number of guided learning hours that WJEC expects the centre to provide to support learners. Guided learning means activities such as classroom-based learning, tutorials and online learning, which is directly supervised by a teacher, tutor or invigilator. It also includes all forms of assessment which take place under the immediate guidance or supervision of a teacher, supervisor or invigilator.

In addition to the GLH, WJEC also specifies a total number of hours that it is expected learners will be required to undertake to complete the qualifications. This is referred to as the total qualification time (TQT). Activities which contribute to the TQT include independent and unsupervised research, unsupervised coursework, unsupervised e-learning, e-assessment and all guided learning.

The total amount of GLH and TQT assigned to these qualifications are:

Qualification	GLH	TQT
Essential Communication Skills (ECommS)		
Entry Level Essential Skills Wales in Communication (Entry 1)	60	60
Entry Level Essential Skills Wales in Communication (Entry 2)	60	60
Entry Level Essential Skills Wales in Communication (Entry 3)	60	60
Level 1 Essential Communication Skills	60	60
Level 2 Essential Communication Skills	60	70
Level 3 Essential Communication Skills	60	80

Essential Application of Number Skills (EAoNS)		
Entry Level Essential Skills Wales in Application of Number (Entry 1)	60	60
Entry Level Essential Skills Wales in Application of Number (Entry 2)	60	60
Entry Level Essential Skills Wales in Application of Number (Entry 3)	60	60
Level 1 Essential Application of Number Skills	60	60
Level 2 Essential Application of Number Skills	60	70
Level 3 Essential Application of Number Skills	60	80

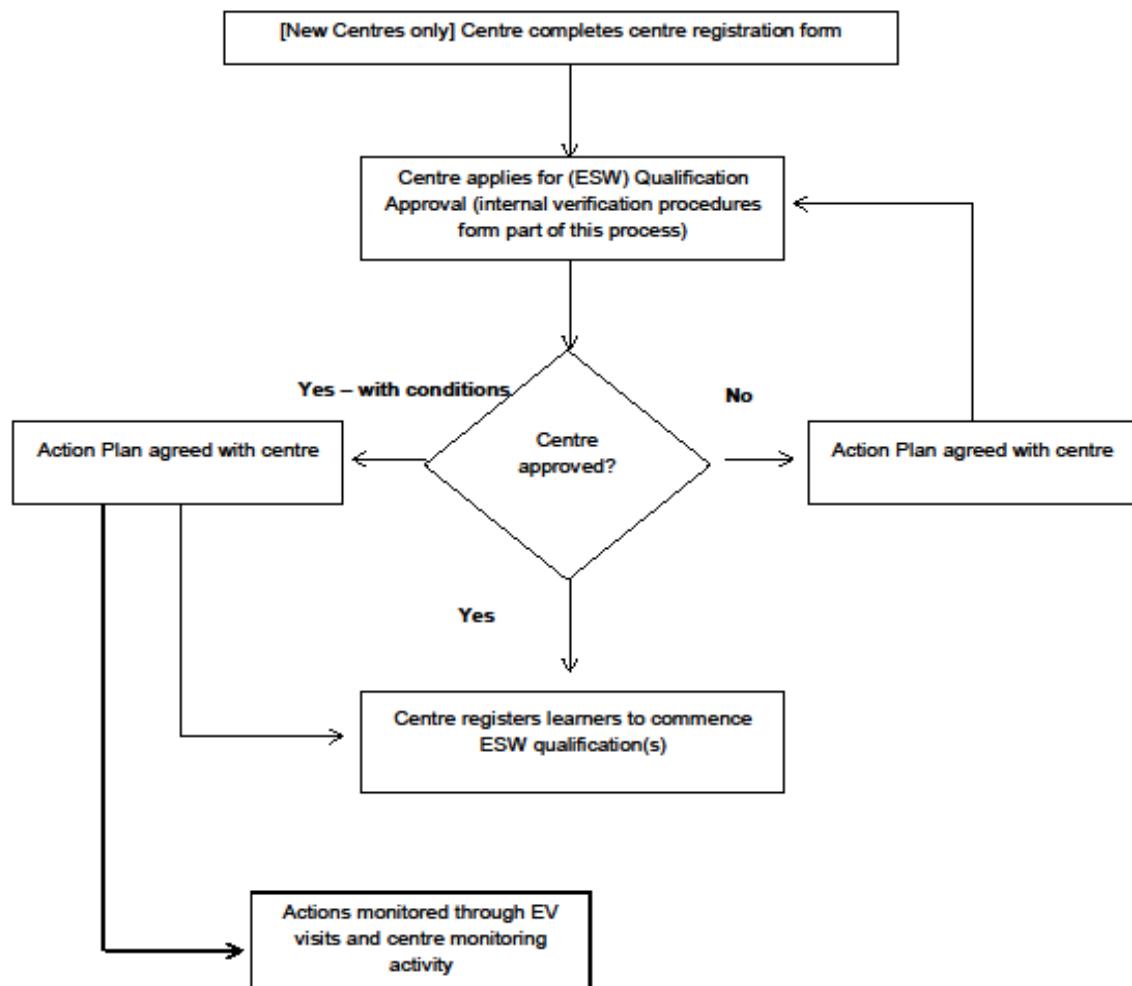
Essential Digital Literacy Skills (EDLS)		
Entry Level Essential Digital Literacy Skills (Entry 1)	60	60
Entry Level Essential Digital Literacy Skills (Entry 2)	60	60
Entry Level Essential Digital Literacy Skills (Entry 3)	60	60
Level 1 Essential Digital Literacy Skills	60	60
Level 2 Essential Digital Literacy Skills	60	70
Level 3 Essential Digital Literacy Skills	60	80

Essential Employability Skills (EES)		
Entry Level Essential Employability Skills (Entry 3)	60	60
Level 1 Essential Employability Skills	60	60
Level 2 Essential Employability Skills	60	70
Level 3 Essential Employability Skills	60	80

2. Centre requirements

2.1 Centre and qualification approval

Any centre wishing to offer the Essential Skills Wales suite of qualifications with WJEC will first need to gain approval following the standard Qualification Approval process. Centre Approval will also be required if the organisation is not already a WJEC centre.



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 'Essential Skills Wales Suite Delivery Guidance for Practitioners' documents.

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 5 of this handbook and WJEC's: Assessment and Verification: A Guide for Centres offering Essential Skills Wales Qualifications

2.2.2 Teaching and subject content qualifications

Whilst WJEC needs to be assured that centre staff can assess these qualifications consistently to the required standard, it is important to appreciate that WJEC have no direct responsibility for determining their suitability to teach or prepare learners.

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

Whilst WJEC 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.

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 WJEC's CPD events can be found on our website: [Professional Learning | WJEC](#); alternatively, centres can request on-site training by contacting the Subject Officer.

2.3 Key roles for assessment

2.3.1 Controlled tasks and structured discussions

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

Centres also have the option to write their own controlled tasks providing each is first approved for use by their awarding body. Guidance on the writing and approval process can be found in *Developing Essential Skills Controlled Tasks* (Qualification Wales January 2019).

In addition, Essential Digital Literacy Skills (EDLS) and Essential Employability Skills (EES) 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 [and any discrete requirements for Entry level AoN/Comm], centres must ensure that each of the following roles are fulfilled:

- Head of Centre
- Centre Contact
- Internal Quality Assurance Co-ordinator (IQAC)
(if more than one Qualification Co-ordinator)
- Qualification Co-ordinator(s)
- Internal Quality Assurer(s)
- Assessor(s)
- Controlled Task Supervisor.

The responsibilities of the controlled task supervisor role are defined in section 4.3 of this handbook. For details of what each of the other roles entail, please refer to WJEC's *Qualification Approval Form: Essential Skills Wales*

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 externally marked.

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

- Head of Centre
- 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 our standard examination conduct requirements, please see section 4.5 of this handbook.

Centres also have the option of allowing their candidates to take a confirmatory test remotely. Remote Invigilation is the monitoring of a candidate sitting an on-screen test, from a remote location. Details of this service can be found by following this link: [Remote Invigilation \(wjec.co.uk\)](https://wjec.co.uk), where Candidate, Centre and Invigilator Guides can be found. Remote Invigilation is an additional option for taking onscreen tests and does not replace the ability to take these tests face to face in the centre or other appropriate location.

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. 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.

Sample tasks are available on the WJEC ESW subject pages to help with candidate preparation and centre staff training/standardisation. These replicate the format and structure of the live controlled tasks.

Please refer to WJEC'S ESW Arrangements for ESW Entry 1-3 Controlled Assessment available as a separate publication.

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 qualifications they work towards.

Where learners are not immediately capable of achieving an Essential Skills 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. The Specification is available from WJEC's website: [Essential Skills for Work and Life \(wjec.co.uk\)](https://wjec.co.uk).

2.4.1 Age restrictions

Whilst there are no formal age restrictions on registering for these qualifications, the Essential Skills qualifications at Entry level are approved by Qualifications Wales for learners over the age of 14. The Essential Skills qualifications at levels 1, 2 and 3 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 (if applicable)

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 conditions outlined in WJEC's Qualification Approval Form.

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 WJEC a conflict of interest form, and contact WJEC for a unique assessment task or test.

3. Delivery of these qualifications

3.1 Initial assessment and induction

An initial assessment of each learner should be made **before** the start of their programme to ensure they are working towards relevant Essential Skills qualification(s) at the appropriate level.

The initial assessment process should identify:

- if the learner has any specific learning needs
- any support and guidance they may need when working towards their qualifications.

It should be noted that all publicly funded Essential Skills providers are in most cases expected to make use of the Wales Essential Skills Toolkit (WEST). Further details about WEST are available from walesessentialskills.com.

3.2 Standards and delivery guidance

Detailed information about subject content and standards applicable to each of the Essential Skills qualifications can be found in the 'Essential Skills Wales Suite Delivery Guidance for Practitioners' documents. This document sets out the range of skills, knowledge and understanding that need to be taught and learned; they also describe the standard expected of candidates undergoing assessment in these qualifications along with WJEC's Assessment and Verification: A Guide for Centres offering Essential Skills Wales Qualifications.

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

3.3 Support materials

In addition to this handbook and the Essential Skills Suite Delivery Guidance for Practitioners, sample controlled tasks and sample confirmatory tests are available from the WJEC ESW page. Support with centre delivery and quality assurance will be provided through centre support visits and on request.

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 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 'on-going' portfolio-type assessment, and candidates must be supervised throughout all formal assessment activity.

All assessment is **externally set** by WJEC, with the option for centres to write their own controlled tasks. 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 WJEC.

Assessment arrangements for each of the Essential Skills 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 <i>and</i> confirmatory test	<i>Task:</i> externally set, internally assessed <i>Test:</i> externally set, externally assessed
Levels 1-3	Essential Communication Skills (ECommS)	Controlled task <i>and</i> confirmatory test	<i>Task:</i> externally set, internally assessed <i>Test:</i> externally set, externally assessed

Levels	Title	Description of assessment model	Internal vs external
Entry (1-3), Levels 1-3	Essential Digital Literacy Skills (EDLS)	Controlled task <i>and</i> confirmatory structured discussion	Externally set, internally assessed
Entry (3), Levels 1-3	Essential Employability Skills (EES)	Controlled task <i>and</i> confirmatory structured discussion	Externally set, internally assessed

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** 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 qualification that they attempt; there is no mechanism for awarding 'partial achievement' of any Essential Skills 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

Please refer to WJEC'S ESW Arrangements for ESW Entry 1-3 Controlled Assessment, which is available as a separate publication

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 WJEC
- 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 WJEC

4.3.2 Obtaining the controlled tasks

Controlled Tasks are available via WJEC's secure website: [Portal by WJEC](#).

Any live controlled tasks may **only** be used for their intended purpose, i.e. to carry out live candidate assessments. Any electronic 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 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.**

A separate set of sample controlled tasks is available from WJEC to help with candidate preparation and centre staff training/standardisation. These replicate the format and structure of the live controlled tasks.

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

The controlled tasks for Essential Application of Number Skills has a separate record sheet, which should be used to record marks awarded and rationales for assessment decisions made. The Essential Communication Skills 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** the documents relating to any controlled tasks they use. Candidates must **not** be given the assessment pack.

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

Controlled tasks must 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 candidates 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 (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 for Access reasons – see Section 4.6 of this handbook). 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 pack includes space for this)
- Ensure each session takes place as close together as possible
- **Plan for a time period of no more than eight weeks** between the beginning of the first session and 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

Try to plan longer sessions as close together as possible allowing candidates to complete the assessments well within the maximum working period.

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).

Centres assessment planning, including their application of the maximum working period. Will be scrutinised as part of WJEC's 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 between sessions. Centres must take particular care with any work stored in electronic 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 also 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 that 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.

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, below).

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.

² Unless additional working time has been granted for Access reasons (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).

It is likely that controlled task supervisors will also perform other roles within the centre (e.g. tutor/teacher, 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 or assessor³.

Centres also have the option of allowing their candidates to take a controlled task remotely. Supervision of remote live assessment is the monitoring of a candidate or candidates as they take a controlled task (referred to here as a 'live assessment') from a remote location. A supervisor uses a computer/laptop webcam and microphone to observe the candidate through the assessment period via e.g., a Teams or Zoom meeting, as well as monitoring what is happening in their assessment environment. Supervision of remote live assessment allows assessment to be carried out at a candidate's home (or other suitable location) without the need for a supervisor being present in the same room, however, the candidate **must** be supervised throughout the remote activity.

Supervision of remote live assessment is an additional service; it does **not** replace the ability to do this face to face within the centre or other appropriate location. Centres should be aware that supervision of remote live assessment may not be suitable for all candidates so care should be taken to identify only those to whom this service would be appropriate.

A centre must first gain approval from their awarding body to undertake supervision of remote live assessment by following the process outlined in this guidance. Complete procedures are outlined in the *Centre Guidance on Supervision of Remote Live Assessment: ESW (Essential Skills Wales) Controlled Task*.

4.3.7 Permitted equipment and resources

Controlled tasks are designed to assess the 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/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).

*Where PCs/laptops/tablets/smartphones are being used, it is the supervisor's responsibility to ensure that they are being used solely for the purpose of the task and not to communicate with others to gain support when completing the task. It is the centre's responsibility to make sure candidates are informed beforehand that any inappropriate use of these devices to gain an unfair advantage will be considered as potential malpractice and must be reported to the relevant awarding body. Malpractice penalties range from awarding a mark of zero in the affected task to disqualification from the overall qualification.

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

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 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)
- ensuring candidates do not plagiarise information found on a website
- ensuring candidates do not collude with a third party to complete the assessment

Supervisors must also ensure that candidates' internet activity remains focussed 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 below). 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.

Centres' 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.

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

Particular care is needed around the use of electronic 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.

As part of the External Quality Assurance process, WJEC will monitor centres' 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

4.3.8.1 Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) software in Essential Application of Number Skills, Essential Communication Skills and Essential Employability Skills

Candidates must not make use of any Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) software, or similar AI assistance applications. Such software must be disabled on any PC or laptop used during the completion of a controlled task. This includes cloud-based typing assistant applications such as Grammarly. Any application is not permitted for use during any assessment if it can be used to:

- suggest improvements to text,
- draft text for responses, or
- complete mathematical calculations.

4.3.8.2 Centre responsibility

Centres **must** ensure that AI software is disabled on any PC or laptop its candidates use to complete a controlled task. When invigilating, centres **must** always remain vigilant for the use of AI software. If any use of AI is identified, the controlled task should be stopped immediately and centres **must** report this as potential malpractice. Any controlled task taken using AI software should not be marked and the candidate will need to re-take the assessment.

4.3.8.3 Use of AI for Essential Digital Literacy Skills

For Essential Digital Literacy Skills, candidates can use AI to create **still** images for use in their digital resource, but they must not use AI to create the digital resource. Candidates must be reminded not to copy task scenarios, or any other part of the task, into any AI tool or platform. Any use of generative AI must be clearly referenced by the learner.

4.3.8.4 Human assistance

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 the 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).

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's paper 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's paper 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.

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 individual learners' 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 of this handbook 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 will need to 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 WJEC will be monitoring the number of instances where resits are required.

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.

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 eight-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

This 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 candidates 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 candidates' knowledge and understanding, as well as providing opportunity for candidates to reflect on the controlled task they have recently completed.

Since the structured discussion relates to the controlled task candidates will have 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.

4.4.2 Candidate preparation for the structured discussion

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 may have supervised access to their completed controlled task, and may be given copies of the relevant pages from the candidate pack, which advises them how to prepare for the structured discussion.

Unsupervised access to the completed controlled task is not permitted.

4.4.3 Conducting the structured discussion

The structured discussion should take place in a location where the assessor and candidate(s) are able to have a conversation without disturbance or interruption. This might include suitable rooms within for example a workplace, community setting or school/college. When the candidate is undertaking the discussion under remote supervision, this should apply to both parties.

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, below). 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.

4.4.4 Evidencing the discussion

The completed mark scheme is the formal record of the structured discussion having taken place, so **must** be completed in all cases. This must include details of the location, date, and 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 assurance 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.

4.4.5 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.

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	60 minutes
Level 3 Essential Application of Number Skills	30	85 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 for individual candidates for Access reasons, see Section 4.6 of this handbook). The candidates must determine responses to every question independently.

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

WJEC makes the confirmatory tests available once a candidate has successfully completed their controlled task. By entering a pass mark in the information system, this automatically triggers the appearance of that candidate in the test system in readiness for taking the confirmatory test. The test system allows the centre to schedule the confirmatory test as and when appropriate for individual candidates.

4.5.2 Ordering the confirmatory tests

Each confirmatory test must be booked in advance. By entering a pass mark in the information system, this automatically triggers the appearance of that candidate in the test system in readiness for taking the confirmatory test. The test system allows the centre to schedule the confirmatory test as and when appropriate for individual candidates.

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

4.5.3 Test conduct requirements

The confirmatory tests require a more formal 'exam' environment than the controlled tasks, although it is recognised that the Essential Skills 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 WJEC must be informed.

Once the site is known to WJEC as an assessment location, it is not necessary to inform us on every occasion that a confirmatory test takes place at this location. However, we may request this information periodically for examination audit purposes.

Centres can apply to invigilate the confirmatory test remotely. Centres wishing to do so must contact WJEC.

4.5.3.2 Receiving and storing test materials

Where candidates are taking a paper-based test, the test papers are 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 packets 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 4.5.3.1, above). 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 WJEC. All assessment sites' storage arrangements will be checked as part of WJEC's examination audit process.

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.

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 (please see 4.5.3.5, below, for further guidance).

There is no requirement to display the standard Joint Council for Qualifications JCQ 'Warning to Candidates' posters for these tests although it might be appropriate to do so if the same room is also used for other tests or examinations.

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

4.5.3.4 The invigilator role

⁴ Unless longer is required to make local adjustments to a paper for Access reasons – see Section 4.6 of this handbook.

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. An electronic 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 WJEC of any security breach).

Invigilators must not carry out any other task whilst invigilating.

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/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 onscreen 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).

Candidates may have access to plain paper and a pen or pencil whilst completing the confirmatory tests. This applies to both onscreen and paper-based versions. At the conclusion of the test invigilators must collect in and securely destroy any paper that has been used during the tests.

4.5.3.6 After the test

All test papers and related material must be collected in as soon as the test has finished. They must be returned to WJEC within one working day.

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

4.5.4 Resits

All confirmatory tests are graded pass/fail, and where candidates have been unsuccessful they will need to 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 WJEC will be monitoring the number of instances where resits are required.

Where candidates do need to resit, the test paper will again be allocated by WJEC 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 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 qualifications 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.**

Adjustments may be allowed, where necessary for any essential skills 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

Essential Application of Number Skills		
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

Essential Application of Number Skills		
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 diagrams, charts or graphs must be created independently by the candidate)	Yes

Essential Communication Skills	
Key principles:	
<i>Speaking and Listening</i>	Speaking and listening is defined as non-written communication conducted within a purposeful context.
<i>Reading</i>	Reading is defined as the independent decoding and understanding of written language to obtain information in a purposeful context. 'Text' is defined as

Essential Communication Skills		
materials that include the use of words that are written, printed, on screen or presented using Braille.		
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
Rest breaks	Yes (although tasks can in any event take place over several 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

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 (eg enlarged print or Braille)	Yes	Yes
BSL interpreter	Yes	Yes
Transcripts	Yes (although any outputs must be created independently by the candidate)	Yes

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	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 WJEC 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. Please see the WJEC guidance document: Access Arrangements, Reasonable Adjustments and Special Consideration for further information.

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 WJEC.

Full details and guidance on the internal and external quality assurance requirements and procedures are provided in: Assessment and Verification: A Guide for Centres offering Essential Skills Wales Qualifications.

5.2 External quality assurance

External quality assurers are appointed to approve centres and to monitor the assessment and internal quality assurance carried out by centres. External quality assurance is carried out to ensure there is validity, reliability and good practice in centres.

Full details and guidance on external quality assurance can be found in: External Verification/ Quality Assurance Procedures for Centres.

6 Dealing with Suspected Malpractice

6.1 Centre and Candidate malpractice

Please refer to the WJEC document 'Guide to preventing, reporting and investigating malpractice': [Centre Information \(wjec.co.uk\)](http://wjec.co.uk).

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 complete 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.
- 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 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**.
- 12 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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