

A close-up photograph of a complex mechanical gear train. The gears are made of metal and are arranged in a series, with some larger than others. The image is partially obscured by a diagonal green overlay that covers the left side and top portion of the frame.

## **Reforming Functional Skills Qualifications - an update**

**Emma Leary, Associate Director,  
Vocational and Technical  
Qualifications Policy**

## About Ofqual

- Ofqual is a non-ministerial government department
- Our statutory objectives include:
  - Promoting public confidence
  - Securing and maintaining qualification standards
  - Securing the efficiency of the market
- We do not:
  - Decide on content or curriculum
  - Have a role in relation to quality of teaching or training provision

## How we regulate

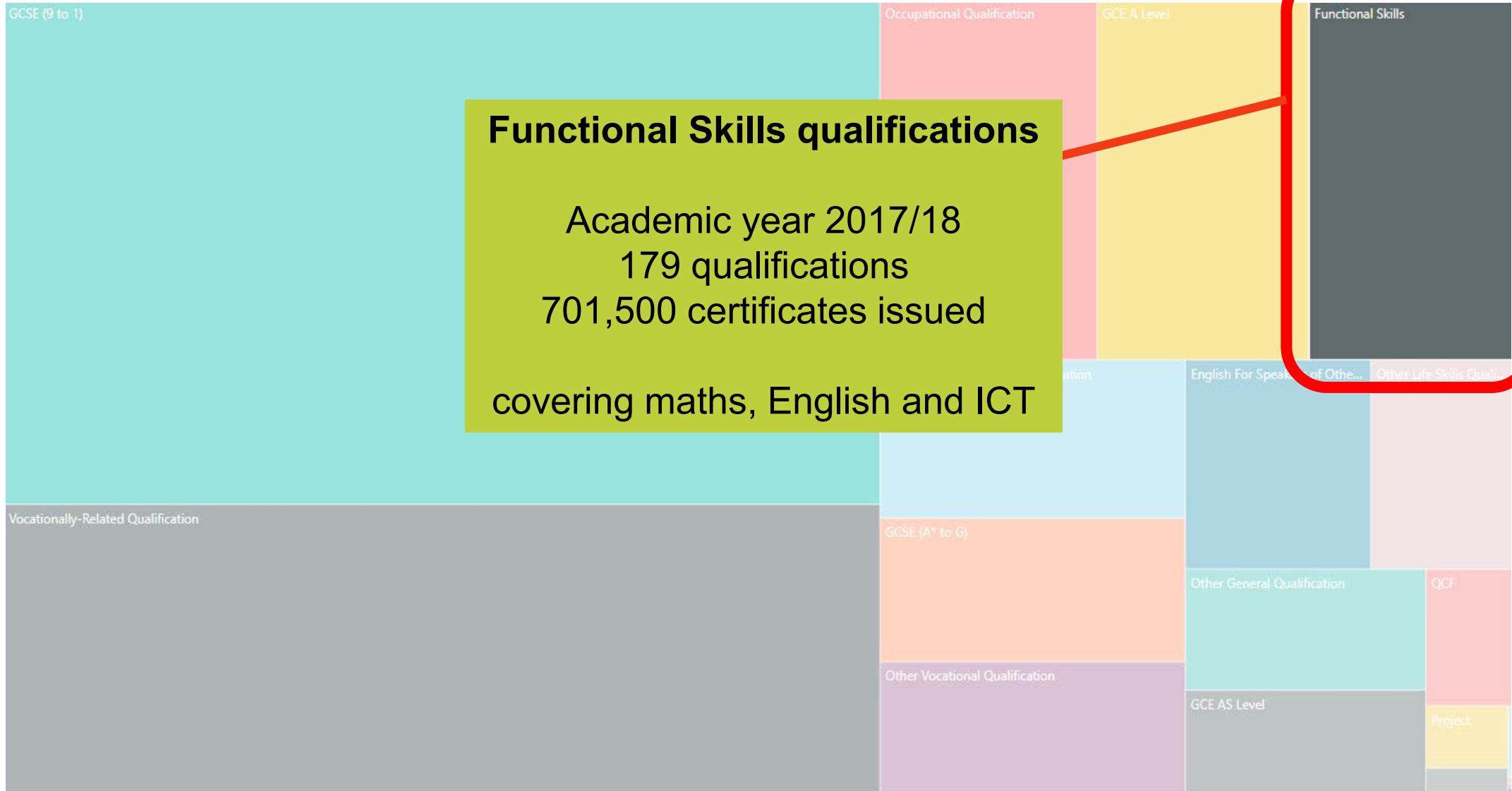
We control entry  
to the regulated  
market

We regulate  
through our  
General  
Conditions of  
Recognition

We use a variety  
of tools to drive  
and enforce  
compliance with  
our Conditions

# Regulated qualification groups – by certificates issued





**Functional Skills qualifications**

Academic year 2017/18  
 179 qualifications  
 701,500 certificates issued

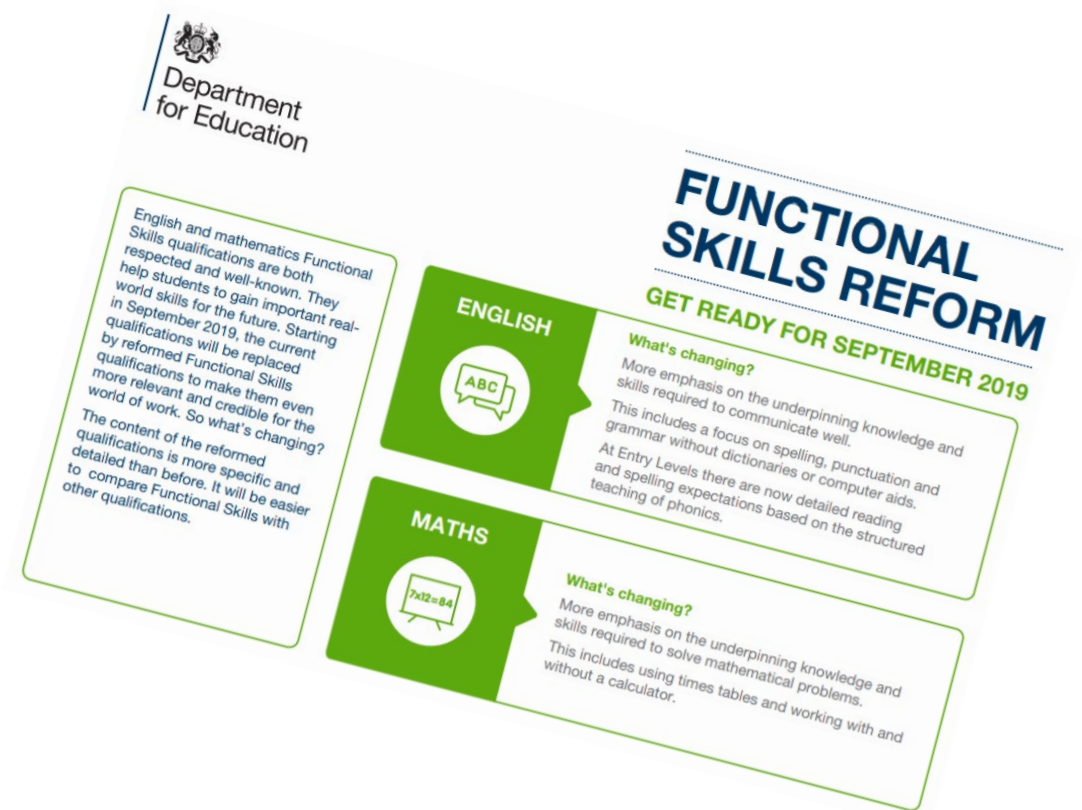
covering maths, English and ICT

## English and maths Functional Skills Qualifications – current context

- Available at five levels
- Designed to recognise real life literacy and numeracy skills in everyday contexts
- High volume qualifications
- Varied cohort
- Large and fluid awarding organisation market
- Enable learners to gain entry into employment and further learning
- In some contexts, play a role in accountability measures

## Reform of Functional Skills maths and English

- The Department for Education wanted to improve Functional Skills qualifications to:
  - provide reliable evidence of learners' achievement against demanding content that is relevant to the workplace:
  - provide a foundation for progression into further study or employment
  - ensure that the qualifications are comparable between awarding organisations and over time



## Reform - roles

- Department for Education is responsible for:
  - overall policy (and purpose) for the qualifications
  - curriculum – including subject content
- Ofqual is responsible for:
  - assessment design
  - assessment standards – including comparability
  - regulation of the awarding organisations and qualifications – including entry to the market
- Ofqual regulations give effect to the DfE policy, purpose and subject content



## Reform - process

DfE

### **Subject Content**

- Overall qualification policy and purpose
- Confirm subject content

Ofqual

### **Assessment Policy**

- Determine approach to regulating the qualifications
- Consult on assessment policy

Ofqual

### **Subject Level Conditions**

- Consult on detailed rules and guidance

AOs / Ofqual

### **Development/Evaluation**

- Develop qualifications
- Undertake technical evaluation

# Regulating reformed Functional Skills qualifications – Ofqual’s Conditions and Guidance

## General Conditions of Recognition

Apply to all awarding organisations and all qualifications

## Qualification Level Conditions

Apply to all qualifications of a particular type (and the awarding organisations offering them)

FSQ  
rules

## Subject Level Conditions

Apply to qualifications in a particular subject (and the awarding organisations offering them)

## What's changing?

### ■ Across both subjects:

- qualifications will be developed against new, more specific common content
- guided learning hours will increase to 55 hours
- minor changes to the allowed minimum and maximum assessment times:

	Minimum Times		Maximum Times	
	New	Change from existing	New	Change from existing
English - levels 1/2	2 hrs	n/a	3 hrs	n/a
English - Entry level	1hr 30	+ 30 mins	2 hrs	n/a
Maths - levels 1/2	1 hr 45	+ 15 mins	2 hrs 30	+ 30 mins
Maths - Entry level	1 hr 15	+ 15 mins	1 hr 45	+ 15 mins

## What's staying the same?

- There will continue to be a pass/fail grading structure
- On-demand assessment will continue
- All Entry level assessments, and the Speaking Listening and Communicating assessment in English at Levels 1 and 2, will be set by the awarding organisation, but may be adapted and marked by centres
- All assessments in maths, and the reading and writing assessments in English at Levels 1 and 2, must be set and marked by the awarding organisation

## Reformed English functional skills

- There will continue to be three components: **reading; writing; and speaking, listening and communicating**
- Must still pass all components to achieve a pass in the overall qualification
- Key changes at Entry level:
  - Introduction of a spelling task
  - Introduction of spelling, punctuation and grammar weighting (between 50-70%)
  - Access to dictionaries or other spelling aids prohibited
- Levels 1 and 2:
  - Retention of weighting for spelling, punctuation and grammar of 40-45%
  - Access to dictionaries or other spelling aids prohibited

## Reformed maths functional skills

- Qualification awarded as a single component, but can be assessed through one or two assessments
- Assessment to be split between **calculator** and **non-calculator** based maths
  - Either as separate assessments or as a single combined assessment
  - Weighting for non-calculator based maths of 25%
- Assessment(s) to cover **underpinning skills** as well as **problem solving**
  - Underpinning skills weighting of 25%
  - Problem solving weighting of 75%

# Reform - progress

DfE

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Ofqual

## Assessment Policy

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March 2019

## Regulating reformed Functional Skills maths and English

- Each reformed Functional Skills qualification will be subject to Technical Evaluation:
  - an up-front check to ensure qualifications are high quality and support consistent assessment and awarding
  - uses external subject experts and Ofqual assessment experts
  - considers issues including:
    - level of demand
    - coverage of subject content
    - quality of questions and associated mark schemes
  
- New qualifications to be taught from September 2019



- More information...

[www.gov.uk/government/collections/  
functional-skills-qualifications](http://www.gov.uk/government/collections/functional-skills-qualifications)