



## Key skills test

### Communication

#### Level 3

#### Test specification

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##### Introduction

1. The communication key skill qualification will be awarded to candidates who are able to demonstrate that their attainment meets national standards in communication in both their portfolio of evidence and an external assessment (hereafter referred to as a test).
2. The test provides the external assessment component for each key skill at each level. The test is externally set and marked. The purpose of the test is to assess the candidate's knowledge, skills and understanding in reading and writing.
3. Performance in the test is used to complement and support performance in the internal assessment component, the portfolio of evidence. The portfolio must contain evidence of the candidate's purposeful and effective application of skills in reading, writing, speaking and listening, which meets the full requirements of part B of the key skill unit specification. The portfolio evidence is internally set, internally assessed and externally moderated/verified. A candidate must satisfy the requirements of both components to be awarded the key skill.
4. The purpose of this specification is to inform the development of tests for the communication key skill at level 3 by clarifying those aspects of the qualification specification which may be tested.
5. This specification is intended to provide writers, editors and reviewers, and also teachers and candidates, with detailed information about the acceptable content, coverage and demand for questions, together with the range of suitable contexts for questions at level 3.
6. This specification should be read in conjunction with:
  - *Level 3 communication key skills standards* (QCA, CCEA, ACCAC, 2004)
  - *The key skills qualifications standards and guidance* (QCA, CCEA, ACCAC, 2004).
7. This specification has been designed to support the development and production of tests in English, Welsh and Gaeilge.

## Design of tests

### *Principles*

8. In creating tests, writers must take the following into account:
  - the test will last for 1 hour and 30 minutes
  - the test will consist of a number of short-answer questions and one extended-answer question, worth a total of 50 marks
  - candidates will be supervised while taking the test
  - candidates may not use dictionaries.
9. The specification is complemented by awarding body instructions to centres on the conduct of tests and guidance on arrangements for candidates with special requirements.

### *Scope and demand of tests*

10. The test must match the identified requirements of the communication key skill at level 3. This means that the test will focus on part A of the key skill qualification specification, entitled 'You need to know how to', as well as drawing on part B, 'You must'. There is no oral test, so skills covered in components C3.1a and C3.1b will be tested only through the portfolio of evidence. For the purpose of this specification, the requirements are organised into skill areas (see below).
11. The communication key skill qualification specifications have been aligned with the national curriculum orders for English, Welsh and Gaeilge for England, Wales and Northern Ireland. At level 3 this means that information on expectations may be drawn from the national curriculum level descriptors for level 7 (and in some cases level 8) and associated programmes of study.

### *Intended pass mark*

12. The test will be designed to have a pass mark in the range 25–35 marks out of 50. Responsibility for setting the final pass mark resides with the awarding bodies acting jointly.

### *Structure of tests and form of questions*

13. All the questions in the test will be based on material presented in a source book for candidates. The material will relate to complex subjects and the associated questions will reflect this complexity. The source book will consist of a varied collection of reading matter, some of which will be extended pieces of writing. There will be both factual information and opinion, and at least one image, for example, a picture, graph, chart, plan or diagram. The source book will have a length of no more than 2,500 words. The length of the source book may vary according to the nature and complexity of the source documents.
14. The test will begin with a number of relatively short-answer questions, which will specify which part or parts of the source material to which the question relates and which will focus on skill area 1.
15. There will be one extended-answer question. This will focus on skill area 2 and will require the candidate to write for a particular audience and a particular purpose. Candidates may draw from all the material in the booklet.
16. There will be no 'follow-through' between questions. Answering a question correctly will not depend on having answered the previous question correctly.
17. All questions must avoid making demands on candidates beyond the scope of the communication skills being assessed. In particular, all language used in the questions

and source material should be clear and direct except where there are assessment-related reasons for deviating from this. Only information relevant to the questions should be included. Expectations of knowledge or familiarity with specialist contexts, concepts and terms beyond those associated with the communication topics in this guidance must be avoided.

### **Context**

18. The tested components of the communication key skill are concerned with reading and synthesising information and writing documents. Examples of contexts which provide opportunities to develop suitable questions include:
- health and safety matters
  - journeys, travel, holidays
  - employment and obtaining jobs
  - employment-related matters – income tax, insurance, budgets
  - environmental issues
  - community issues
  - gender and other equality issues
  - organising events
  - advertising and the media
  - education, training and schooling
  - social issues.
19. Some candidates will be familiar with a particular context and others may not have this advantage. Some candidates may not have been on an overseas holiday; young candidates may have limited experience of citizenship or of shopping; older candidates may be less familiar with some sports or hobbies. This does not mean that such topics should always be avoided but sufficient descriptions and/or images may be necessary to ensure that the source material is understood by all concerned.
20. Every effort must be made to ensure that source material is free of any form of bias (for example gender, ethnic, age) which might favour or disadvantage any candidate or group of candidates. Consideration should also be given to the way sensitive subject matter and content is used in the source book and associated questions.

**Skill areas and mark allocations**

The table shows mark allocation against the skill area headings

|              |                                      |                  |
|--------------|--------------------------------------|------------------|
| Skill area 1 | Reading and synthesising information | Approx. 25 marks |
| Skill area 2 | Writing                              | Approx. 25 marks |
|              | <b>Total</b>                         | <b>50 marks</b>  |

**Skill area 1 Reading and synthesising information**

|  |                |
|--|----------------|
| <b>3.1.1</b> Use different documents to obtain relevant information  | (2- 4 marks)   |
| <b>3.1.2</b> Compare accounts and recognise possible opinion and bias.   | (10 –12 marks) |
| <b>3.1.3</b> Present your own interpretation of the subject in a way that brings together information from different documents in a coherent form. | (10 –12 marks) |

**Skill area 2 Writing for communication**

This skill area covers the following skills from the key skills qualification specification

|  |                |
|--|----------------|
| <b>3.3.1</b> Select appropriate formats for presenting information including essays, reports and articles.<br><br>Select and use an appropriate style and tone to suit the audience, the degree of formality required and the nature of the subject. | (3- 4 marks)   |
| <b>3.3.2</b> Organise material coherently to suit the length, complexity and purpose of the document.  | (12 –13 marks) |
| <b>3.3.3</b> Proofread and, where necessary, redraft documents so that spelling, punctuation and grammar are accurate.   | (9-10 marks)   |