

Literacy and numeracy requirements for higher level teaching assistants

Introduction

This is an updated factsheet providing in-depth information about higher level teaching assistant (HLTA) assessment. It answers frequently asked questions on the literacy and numeracy qualifications required of potential candidates in order to meet standard 2.6 of the professional standards for higher level teaching assistants. It is aimed at potential candidates and will be of interest to local authorities (LAs) that have responsibility for selecting candidates; school leaders such as headteachers; and regional providers of assessment (RPAs).

Higher level teaching assistant

HLTA factsheet number 1

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Frequently asked questions

What are the literacy and numeracy requirements of the professional standards for higher level teaching assistants?

Standard 2.6 of the professional standards for higher level teaching assistants requires candidates to have achieved a qualification in literacy and numeracy at level 2 of the national qualifications framework (NQF) or above.

Why do the qualifications need to be on the national qualifications framework ?

Qualifications accredited to the NQF are:

- based on agreed national standards
- offered by awarding bodies meeting criteria published by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA), together with ACCAC and NICCEA (the respective regulatory authorities of Wales and Northern Ireland), to ensure quality and to protect the interests of candidates, and
- monitored by the regulatory authorities in accordance with criteria and codes of practice to ensure reliability, consistency and fairness across all awarding bodies offering similar qualifications.

More information on the NQF and accredited qualifications can be found at www.qca.org.uk

Why do I need these qualifications?

The majority of respondents to the consultation on the professional standards for higher level teaching assistants in 2003 (including unions and professional associations representing teachers, headteachers and support staff) supported the inclusion of standard 2.6 because they felt it appropriate that support staff working at this level should be able to demonstrate secure standards of literacy and numeracy. It is also seen as beneficial for candidates – for reasons of portability and progression – for the standard to require nationally recognised qualifications in these areas.

What are acceptable qualifications?

Acceptable level 2 qualifications to meet standard 2.6 are:

Qualification type	Literacy	Numeracy
GCSE	English A*- C English literature A*- C	Mathematics A*- C
Basic skills	Certificate in adult literacy level 2	Certificate in adult numeracy level 2
Key skills	Communication level 2	Application of number level 2
ESOL	Skills for life qualifications level 2	

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Evidence of attainment of some level 3 qualifications may also meet standard 2.6. Acceptable level 3 qualifications are:

Qualification type	Literacy	Numeracy
GCE A-level	English language English literature English language and literature	Use of mathematics Mathematics Further mathematics Statistics
GCE AS-level	English language English literature English language and literature	Mathematics Use of mathematics Further mathematics Pure mathematics Statistics Mechanics Applied mathematics Discrete mathematics
Key skills	Communication level 3	Application of number level 3

I left school before GCSEs were introduced. Do my qualifications count?

Older, nationally recognised qualifications, including GCE O-level passes and CSE grade 1, are also acceptable to meet standard 2.6.

The certificate of extended education (CEE) was introduced in 1976 and was conducted by a consortium of GCE and CSE boards. CEE grades I, II and III were certified as being equivalent to at least a grade C in the O-level examination. Passes at grades I, II and III in English and mathematics are therefore acceptable in order to meet standard 2.6.

Acceptable qualifications are:

Qualification type	Literacy	Numeracy
CSE GCE O-level pass	English grade 1 English language	Mathematics/arithmetic grade 1 Mathematics
CEE	English literature English grades I, II and III	Mathematics grades I, II and III

Note Titles of mathematics and English awards varied across awarding bodies and across time. Mathematics titles included (but were not restricted to) ‘applicable mathematics’, ‘mathematics and theoretical mechanics’, ‘pure mathematics and probability’, ‘commercial mathematics’, ‘general mathematics’, ‘modern mathematics’, ‘technical mathematics’, ‘mathematics and statistics’ and ‘mathematical studies’. For the purposes of standard 2.6 therefore, O-level passes or CSE grade 1 in mathematics or arithmetic or variations thereof are acceptable. However, O-level/CSE subjects with some mathematical components, eg. business/commercial studies or accountancy, are not acceptable. Similarly, there may be some variation in the actual titles of English awards.

How do I know if my O-level grade is a pass?

Before the summer of 1975, each O-level board had its own grading system; however, the certificates issued clearly state that the candidate has passed. Most certificates did not include the grade that was awarded; this was issued separately on a results slip. From the summer of 1975 onwards, all boards adopted the same system, with grades A to C equivalent to the previous pass grades. If you took O-levels from June 1975 onwards, you will need to have achieved results at grade C or higher.

I went to school in Scotland. What about me?

Qualifications in Scotland are regulated by the Scottish Qualification Authority (SQA). The four countries of the United Kingdom recognise each other's nationally accredited qualifications. Acceptable Scottish qualifications are:

Qualification type	Literacy	Numeracy
SEB	Until 1985, C or better on the ordinary grade of the Scottish Certificate of Education. In or after 1986, grade 3 or better on the standard grade of the Scottish Certificate of Education. Higher grade English: C or better in Certificate of sixth year studies English.	Until 1985, C or better on the ordinary grade of the Scottish Certificate of Education. In or after 1986, grade 3 or better on the standard grade of the Scottish Certificate of Education Higher grade mathematics: C or better in Certificate of Sixth year studies mathematics.

Do I need level 2 qualifications as an entry requirement for HLTA training?

There are no entry requirements for HLTA training, although providers of preparation (PoPs) will wish to assure themselves that candidates have the capacity to meet all of the HLTA professional standards, including standard 2.6, on entry to the preparation course. You must, therefore, have evidence of your level 2 qualifications before you begin preparation.

I have been told that I must meet standard 2.6 before being accepted for preparation for HLTA assessment. Why is this?

Local authorities, before allocating public funds, require candidates to produce their certificates before approving them to go forward for preparation for final assessment. The reason for this is that, to undertake a preparation course, you must be judged to be meeting all of the standards, including 2.6.

Regional providers of assessment (RPAs) must be confident that you have acceptable literacy and numeracy qualifications before the school assessment visit is arranged. Your preparer will send the RPA copies of your certificates on your behalf.

If, after reading the *Guidance to the standards*, you feel that you can demonstrate all of the standards except 2.6, you will need to achieve appropriate qualifications before applying for preparation. Your LA may be able to assist you with this.

When will I have to show evidence of having met standard 2.6?

You may be asked to show evidence of how you meet this standard several times on your way to gaining HLTA status. The school and local authority must be confident that candidates have the right support for training so, if applicable, they will need to ensure that you have the appropriate qualifications or help make arrangements for you to gain them. As part of preparing for final assessment for HLTA status, you will need to show your original 2.6 documents to the preparer so that a check is made before the assessment visit. This avoids unnecessary disappointment for candidates if they have not got the appropriate evidence and wasting the time of the assessor and school staff. You must produce the appropriate documentation to be able to progress with preparation and for your assessment to be arranged for you.

Provisional results slips or letters are not acceptable as evidence as they are subject to change.

I can't find my certificates. What should I do?

If you are unable to find your original certificates you can apply to your awarding body for replacement certificates or a confirmation of results letter. Awarding bodies normally make a charge for this service. A list of awarding bodies offering current qualifications, including key and basic skills, can be found at www.openquals.org.uk This database includes links to the awarding bodies' websites, where you will find contact information for replacement certificates.

Current GCSE awarding bodies are listed in annex A. If your lost certificates relate to O-levels or CSEs, please note that some older examination boards may be subsumed within the current GCSE awarding bodies. Annex A gives the website link to each awarding body's procedure for obtaining replacement certificates, together with a list of former examination boards whose records they hold.

A statement of results can be accepted from any of the five GCSE awarding bodies as listed in Annex A.

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I was educated outside the UK. Are my qualifications acceptable?

The National Recognition Information Centre for the United Kingdom (NARIC) provides a service for individuals seeking information on comparability between international and UK academic qualifications. UK NARIC is only able to assess overseas awards which constitute national standards in the country of origin. A letter of comparability from UK NARIC is acceptable evidence for standard 2.6. Alternatively, if you have achieved qualifications outside of the UK which you feel have covered the level 2 literacy and numeracy requirements, you may wish to take the online basic skills practice tests. These can be found at www.move-on.org.uk After trying the practice tests, you may decide that you are ready to take the tests without following a course of learning.

I have a UK qualification which is not listed, but I've been told is equivalent to level 2. Why is this not acceptable?

Qualifications that are accredited to the national qualifications framework as meeting the national standards for literacy and numeracy provide secure and consistent outcomes and offer candidates national recognition of their achievement and opportunities for progression. Many other qualifications and training may cover some, or all, of the knowledge requirements. If you feel you have achieved the requisite level, you can elect to take the tests, without following an additional programme of learning. Practice tests can be found at www.move-on.org.uk to help you decide whether you are ready to take the tests.

I have an accredited qualification related to literacy (or numeracy) but it's not on the list. Why not?

There are many qualifications which have relevance to literacy and/or numeracy. However, the focus of assessment for these qualifications is not on the candidate's literacy or numerical skills but on other areas such as their ability to support learning. Other qualifications – for example, accountancy or business studies – may require some demonstration of candidates' literacy or numerical skills but the full range of the national standards for literacy and numeracy are not assessed. Moreover, a weaker performance in literacy or numeracy could be offset by a stronger performance elsewhere, so that a candidate who does not meet the literacy and numeracy standards could still achieve such qualifications.

I have completed an access programme for entry to initial teacher training (ITT). Why is this not acceptable evidence for standard 2.6?

The entry requirements for initial teacher training require candidates to have a level of understanding equivalent to GCSE grade C or above in English and mathematics. In order to widen participation and offer routes into ITT for those who have not achieved national qualifications in these subjects, providers may, at their discretion, accept candidates who have completed appropriate access courses; have achieved qualifications not accredited but seen as equivalent to level 2 of the national qualifications framework; or who have passed provider-devised equivalency tests. However, these alternative entry requirements for ITT are not part of the NQF and so are not acceptable to meet standard 2.6.

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The standards for qualified teacher status (QTS) ensure consistency between successful candidates by the time they complete their training. These standards include the requirement to pass the national skills tests in mathematics, English and information and communication technology (ICT) which are based on the professional practice of teachers. The ITT programme will identify and address any areas where the candidate requires additional support to meet the exit standards.

I would like to progress to ITT. Is there anything I should be aware of?

Some HLTA candidates may wish to progress to qualified teacher status in the future. Entrants to ITT will need to have achieved a level of understanding equivalent to GCSE passes at grade C or above in English and mathematics. In addition, entrants for primary or key stage 2/3 courses born on or after 1 September 1979 are also required to have attained the standard required to achieve at least a grade C in a GCSE examination in a science subject. Unlike the HLTA standard 2.6, this is an entry requirement rather than an exit standard. Decisions on whether an individual candidate has met the entry requirements are for individual providers to take. Providers may decide to accept non-accredited qualifications or to offer their own tests where candidates do not hold the relevant GCSEs.

Key skills and the certificates in adult literacy/numeracy would not normally meet the entry requirements for ITT. This is because there is not sufficient breadth of subject coverage in these qualifications. Candidates considering progression to QTS would therefore need to demonstrate a wider knowledge than that required to meet HLTA standard 2.6. They could do this by achieving appropriate GCSEs or, if this is acceptable to their chosen provider, completing other qualifications or equivalency tests.

Annex A – Current GCSE awarding bodies

This annex gives information about obtaining replacement certificates. For each awarding body, there is a link to the appropriate procedure and a list of the former examination boards whose records they hold.

Awarding body	Web reference	Former examination boards
Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA)	www.aqa.org.uk/admin/library/AQA-examrecords.pdf	Associated Examining Board Associated Lancashire Schools Examinations Board Joint Matriculation Board North West Regional Examinations Board Northern Examinations and Assessment Board Northern Examinations Association Northern Regional Examinations Board South Eastern Regional Examinations Board South West Regional Examinations Board Southern Examining Group The West Yorkshire and Lindsey Regional Examinations Board Yorkshire and Humberside Regional Examinations Board
Northern Ireland Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (NICCEA)	www.ccea.org.uk/gcse.htm (follow 'Administration' link)	Northern Ireland Examinations Board

Awarding body	Web reference	Former examination boards
Edexcel	www.edexcel.org.uk/Studying/StudyingEditorial.aspx?id=83064&ciid=176823	East Anglian Examinations Board London Regional Examinations Board Metropolitan and Middlesex Regional Examinations Board University of London Examinations Board
OCR	www.ocr.org.uk/OCR/WebSite/Data/Publication/Forms/Applicatio52136.pdf	East Midland Regional Examinations Board Midland Examining Group Oxford and Cambridge Examinations and Assessment Council Oxford and Cambridge Schools Examinations Board Southern Regional Examinations Board Southern Universities' Joint Board for Schools Examinations The West Midlands Examinations Board University of Cambridge Local Examination Syndicate University of Oxford Delegacy of Local Examinations
Welsh Joint Education Committee (WJEC)	www.wjec.co.uk/certforme.pdf	