VQA Functional Skills Exam System (Secure Browser)

Learner guidance

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Introduction

The following guidance relates only to remotely invigilated exams.

Under these circumstances, the use of a webcam, screen sharing, and microphone is essential for ensuring that the exam is completed in an appropriate and compliant environment. The webcam, screen share and microphone will capture images and audio to confirm your identity and ensure that no form of collusion or malpractice occurs.

Any images and sounds captured will be used solely for invigilation and identity verification purposes.

Exam conditions

All remote exams must take place in a controlled environment.

VQA defines a controlled environment as a quiet, appropriate space conducive to the undertaking of a remotely invigilated exam. The environment must be:

- populated only by yourself and no other parties
- well-lit to allow maximum webcam visibility
- free from distractions that may cause you to divert your attention away from the computer screen or move outside of the webcam's viewing range
- free from notes and posters on the wall
- free from noise
- free from personal or sensitive material
- free from visual or physical access to supporting materials (such as educational texts)
- free from electronic devices other than the computer used to undertake the exam.

The space, as described above, must meet these requirements throughout the entire duration of the exam. If the set exam requirements are not met, the exam may be voided.

If, for any reason, you are unable to undertake the exam in a space deemed quiet and appropriate, you should inform your training provider/recognised centre at the earliest opportunity and arrange to undertake your exam at a time when these conditions can be met.

You must have a desktop or laptop computer which is equipped with a working webcam, a stable internet connection, and the Google Chrome web browser. It can be downloaded here.

Guidance for materials

The following guidance relating to materials within the controlled environment must always be followed to ensure compliance.

- Mobile phones and electronic devices, except for the computer you are using to undertake the exam, must be **switched off and stored in an inaccessible location** to minimise the risk of distraction.
- Smartwatches and other wearable technological devices must be **switched off and removed**.
- Headphones must **not be** worn.
- No personal handheld calculators are permitted for Maths exams. For Maths level 1 and 2, a digital calculator is available on the system and **must be used** if a calculator is required.
- Water must be stored in a clear glass or a clear bottle with the labels removed. No other food or drink is permitted.
- Second monitors are not permitted.
- Identification must be clearly presented to the camera at the start of an exam. If identification is not provided, or is unclear, at the start of the exam, this will result in the exam being voided. Please refer to page 9 for further guidance on acceptable identification and how to appropriately show it to the camera to prevent a void.
- A room sweep must be completed at the start of an exam. If a room sweep is not completed, this will result in the exam being voided. For further guidance on how to conduct a room sweep, please refer to page 10.

Permitted materials (subject to the exam type and level)

Rough paper

In Maths level 1 and 2 **only**, you are permitted to take **one** piece of rough (blank) paper into the exam to support mathematical calculation. Any calculations written on rough paper should be transferred into the digital working out area available on the system. Any that are not will not count towards your final mark.

If rough paper is used during the exam, the below rules apply.

- The rough paper must clearly be presented to the camera at the start of the exam to show that it is blank on both sides.
- At the end of the exam, the learner must hold up their rough paper to the camera, showing both sides. After this has been done, they must tear up the rough paper, also in full view of the camera.

If the above actions are not completed when using rough paper the exam will be voided. If you run out of time before you can perform these actions, this will be taken into consideration.

Dictionaries

A single physical dictionary is permitted for Functional Skills English Reading exams **only**. It must be placed on your desk, contain no notes or other handwritten additions to the original published text, and be held up to the webcam before the exam starts.

During the exam

If the below exam requirements are not met during an exam, the exam may be voided.

Leaving the webcam's viewing range

You must remain in view of the webcam at all times and must not walk away from the screen at any point during your exam. Please ensure that you are fully prepared to remain in view of your device before the exam begins.

Changing location

You must remain in the same location during your exam and must not move or transfer your device to another location or room. This stipulation applies even if you remain in the webcam's viewing range during the movement or transfer of your device, or if you lose your internet connection. In the latter scenario, please call VQA on 0333 358 3344 to ask for advice. Our office hours are 08:30-17:00 Monday-Friday.

Diverting attention away from the screen

You must ensure that your attention remains on-screen for the entire duration of the exam. You must not:

- **consistently** divert your attention away from the screen, keyboard, mouse or other equipment directly associated with your computer (i.e. look away from the screen on multiple occasions during the exam)
- **consistently** divert your attention to one specific area other than the screen (i.e. focus your attention towards one specific location on multiple occasions during the exam)
- divert your attention away from the screen for any singular length of time that exceeds a short, seconds-long glance or brief loss of focus.

Speaking

Speaking is permitted only when you are:

- reading the questions aloud to yourself for comprehension purposes.
- considering the content of the questions aloud to yourself for comprehension purposes.
- considering the functionality of the website or your device aloud to yourself.
- discussing the website's functionality with, or seeking technical support from, VQA.

You must not communicate with any other parties during your exam, except in circumstances where you lose your internet connection or there are problems with system functionality.

If there is any suspicion that you are communicating with others during your exam, discussing the questions with others during your exam, or speaking aloud for any reason other than those highlighted above, the exam will be voided.

Using unauthorised software or websites

Your screen is visible to VQA at all times during your exam, and you must not access any programs or websites other than the exams platform. This includes access to online dictionaries, Grammarly, and any other similar applications, websites, or browser plug-ins or extensions.

In the event of an emergency occurring during an exam that is undertaken in a location external to your home, your training provider/recognised centre's and/or the location's policies on emergencies must be followed.

Accessing the exam system

You will receive an email from **support@vqa.org** containing your login details and a link to access the exam system.

Please note: you will need to use the **Google Chrome** web browser to access the exam portal. It can be downloaded **here**.

Your login details will include the email address provided to us at the time of booking by your centre, and a password auto-generated by the exam system.

The exam system can also be accessed by typing **tna.tquk.org** into the URL bar of your **Google Chrome browser.**

Important note

Before you start your exam, please close all applications on your device and deactivate any Grammarly or any other spelling, punctuation and grammar related apps.

Downloading the secure browser

To take your exam you must download the Respondus Secure Browser. This technology is launched through Google Chrome and locks down everything on your computer, except for the exam system, meaning you will not be able to navigate away from the exam system screen.

The Respondus Secure Browser can be downloaded at this link, and full details on how to use it are featured in your booking email.

If you are using a Chromebook please check it meets the minimum requirements by clicking here. Instructions to download the secure browser for Chromebooks can be found here.

Minimum technical requirements

To run the exam system, your device needs to meet certain minimum requirements, which can be found here.

Photo identification and headshot requirements

Photo identification is an exam requirement

You must provide photographic identification at the start of the exam by clearly showing your ID to the camera. To do this, hold your photo ID in front of the webcam and place your ID inside the green frame. Once you have clearly positioned your ID, select the capture photo option. This can be retaken if required.



Learner ID photo

The image must be clear, avoiding any poor lighting, shadowing or reflection. Providing sufficient ID is an exam requirement and failing to provide a clear image will result in the exam being voided.

Acceptable forms of photographic identification include:

- a valid passport
- a valid driver's licence
- a valid staff photo ID card

Learner headshot photo

Once you have taken a clear image of your ID, you will be required to take a headshot. To do this, simply place your face inside the green frame and click the 'Capture Photo' button.

The image must be clear, avoiding any poor lighting, shadowing or reflection, so VQA's invigilators can clearly verify the image against your ID.



Once the two photos have been taken the system will display on the same screen for you to accept them and click “Verify”.

Learners with Religious Coverings

In order to verify your identity, religious coverings should be briefly removed while a photograph is taken for the remote online exam. Once the identity check is complete, candidates may replace their covering—such as a veil—and proceed with the examination as normal.

Room sweep

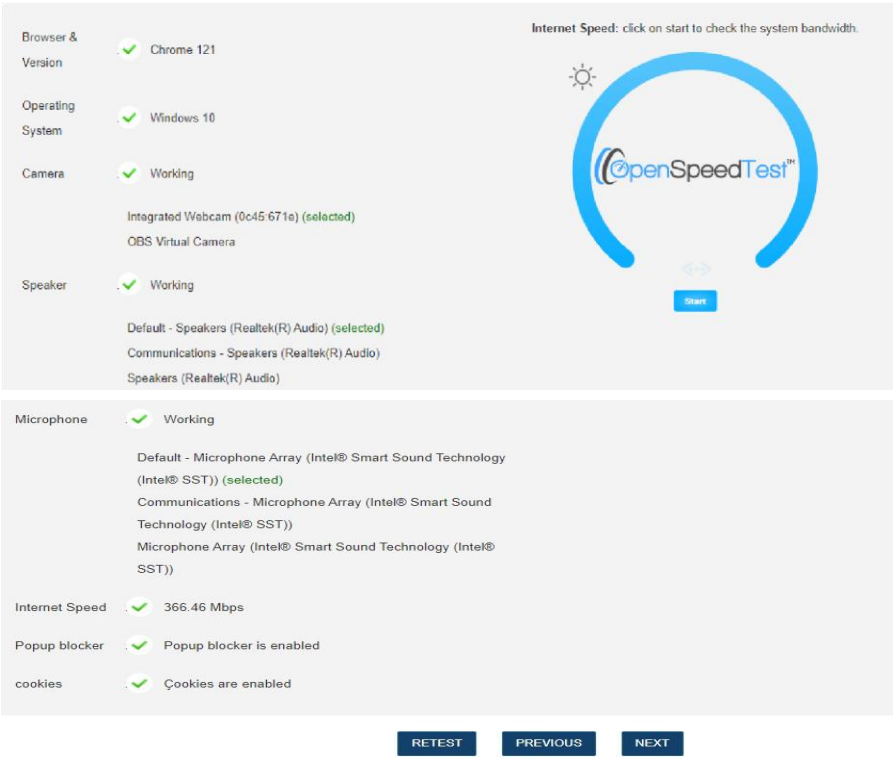
A room sweep is a mandatory exam requirement that allows us to verify that you have met the controlled environment conditions. Failure to complete a room sweep will result in the exam being voided.

A room sweep is a recording of the area in which you are about to complete your exam.
Once you select ‘Capture Room Video’, the recording will begin. Move your webcam in a 360° motion, ensuring you cover the entirety of the room, including the desk you are using to take the exam. The view of the desk should be sufficient for us to verify that there are no unauthorised materials or items on the desk. The recording will last for 50 seconds. An example of how to conduct a room sweep can be found here.

Site settings and enabling security access

Once the 'Start Test' option has been selected, the platform will perform system checks to ensure the device meets the requirements. Once the check has been completed, the findings will be displayed with a green tick or red cross.

You will only be able to access the live exam once all system checks have been completed and displayed with the green tick.



If there are any red crosses, you must check your browser settings and permissions by following the steps below.

To enable access to Google Chrome:

1. Click on the three dots icon in the top right and select 'Settings'.
2. Select 'Privacy and security' then 'Site settings'.
3. Click on 'view permissions and data stored across sites'.
4. Select the exam site and click on the arrow to the right to open the permissions section.
5. Ensure the camera, microphone, motion sensors, pop-ups and redirects are all enabled.
6. Carry out another system check. Once complete and presented with all green ticks, the exam can be attempted.

Utilising VQA's exam system functions

The exam portal has multiple tools you can use to adjust the portal's settings to your preference.

Brightness and font size

The icon in the top right corner allows you to change your preferences regarding the brightness and font size of the exam display. Select your preference and click apply.

Writing notes

There is a feature for writing notes that can be accessed by selecting notes in the bottom left of the exam screen. This generates a pop-up box in which you can write any notes you find helpful during your exam. These notes will not be marked and so will not contribute to your final result.

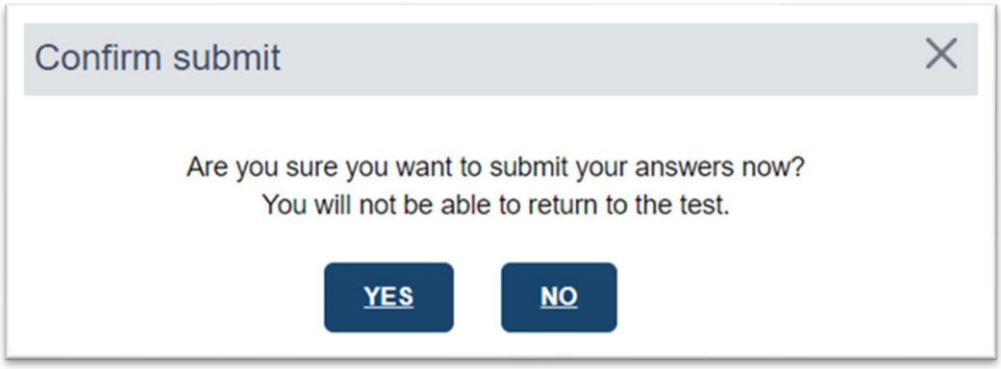
Exam aids

Functional Skills Maths level 1 and 2 exams permit the use of an on-screen calculator to answer questions in section B. To access the calculator, click on the side panel on the right of the exam screen, labelled exam aids. Here, you will also find the protractor and ruler tools. Click either icon to display the protractor/ruler on the screen to assist you with answering questions.

Please note: the system calculator is the only calculator you can use to complete the exam. Personal handheld calculators, calculator apps on your phone, and calculator programs on your computer are not permissible.

Submitting the exam

Once you have completed your assessment, you will be asked to confirm that you want to submit your answers. If you are satisfied that you have completed the exam, click yes. If you wish to return to the exam to continue working or to check your answers, click no. Once you have submitted your exam, the status on your dashboard will change to **completed**.



What is a void?

Non-compliance with this guidance could result in your exam receiving a void outcome. Please be aware that a void outcome will not contribute to your total number of attempts, however resit fees may apply.

If the decision is made to void an exam, this will be communicated to the exams/admin officer at your training provider/centre. Details about the reason for the decision will be included in this communication. VQA will not communicate this to you or your employer; this is the responsibility of the training provider/recognised centre.

If you receive a void due to not meeting the mandatory exam requirements, your provider or centre admin will be required to re-book your exam.

Connection issues

If you experience connection issues during the exam, the system will allow you to log back in to continue. This must be done within a 10-minute window from when the connection was lost and you must be in the same location when you resume.

If you continue to experience issues, the system will allow a maximum of three login attempts for one scheduled exam before the exam becomes locked out.

You are allowed to call VQA at any point during remote invigilation if you experience technical difficulties. You will not be voided for seeking technical support as we will be able to hear you talking and match it up with our call records to confirm adherence with exam conditions. Please see below for our contact details.

Troubleshooting

- If your issue is urgent (for example, you experience problems during your exam or can't log in when you are ready to sit), please call the VQA office on 03333583344.
- If your issue is not urgent, (for example, you have not received an email or need to reset your password), please email us at support@vqa.org.
- Support is only available during office hours.

Further guidance

For specific JCQ guidance relating to on-screen tests please visit this link.

www.vqa.org

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Company number 07827508.
Registered address: Crossgate House, Cross Street, Sale, England, M33 7FT.