

General

Acronyms

AQP	Assessment Quality Partner
CHE	Council for Higher Education
DQP	Development Quality Partner
FET	Further Education and Training
FLC	Foundational Learning Competence
FLC Coms or	
FC	Foundational Learning Competence Communications
FLC ML or	
FML	Foundational Learning Competence Mathematical Literacy
IEB	Independent Examinations Board
LOLT	Language of learning and teaching
NAMB	National Artisan Moderating Body
NLRD	National Learners' Records Database
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
NSC	National Senior Certificate
QCTO	Quality Council for Trades and Occupations
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
SAQA	South African Qualifications Authority
SETA	Sector Education and Training Authority

What is the QCTO?

The QCTO acronym stands for the Quality Council for Trades and Occupations. It is the third quality assurance council to be established, the other two being the Council on Higher Education (CHE) and the Council for Quality Assurance in General and Further Education and Training, better known as Umalusi.

The Quality Council for Trades and Occupations was established in 2008 by the Skills Development Act to perform certain functions which include but is not limited to the following:

- Design and develop occupational standards and qualifications and submit them to the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) for registration on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF)
- Establish and maintain occupational standards and qualifications;
- Ensure the quality of occupational standards and qualifications and learning in and for the workplace.

For more information about the Quality Council for Trades and Occupations (QCTO), please visit their website, currently housed on the SAQA website www.saga.org.za There are also some FAQs at www.nqf.org.za/page/faq/qcto

What is an Assessment Quality Partner (AQP)?

Assessment Quality Partners (AQPs) are appointed by the QCTO to develop standardised assessment instruments for external summative assessment and to manage external assessment for qualifications or part qualifications registered by the QCTO.

The QCTO appoints Development Quality Partners (DQPs) to whom they delegate the function of developing occupational qualifications, under the direction of the QCTO. Assessment Quality Partners (AQPs) are appointed by the QCTO to develop standardised assessment instruments for external summative assessment of the QCTO qualifications, to manage the external assessment and forward the results to the QCTO as required. There is only one AQP for each qualification or part qualification.

The National Artisan Moderating Body (NAMB) was the first AQP appointed by the QCTO in July 2011. Its status as an AQP is legislated in the Skills Development Act. The IEB is the first non-legislated body to be appointed as an Assessment Quality Partner for the QCTO. The documents appointing the IEB as the Assessment Quality partner (AQP) for Foundational Learning Competence by the QCTO were signed on 18 May 2012.

The IEB is an assessment body that works in schooling, adult education and training. It is also a non-profit organisation, public benefit organisation, dedicated to providing adults in industry with reliable and valid assessment of competence in the fundamental learning at an affordable rate.

The IEB has a long history with the assessment of adult learners, particularly in industry, where the learning environment differs substantially from a traditional institutional environment. The different learning environment however does not diminish the need for a well-articulated learning programme in these fundamental areas of learning. There is enough research that shows that language proficiency is closely aligned to success in learning in other domains. In addition, success in industry does require a minimum level of mathematical literacy competence.

As part of its Service Level Agreement with the QCTO, the IEB will be establishing a record of providers of Foundational Learning Competence and also a database of assessment centres for the FLC. Information about these processes will be made available shortly and interested organisations will be invited to participate.

The IEB is proud and honoured to be involved in building the skills base of our country – we are Proudly South African and dedicated to doing the best we can to overcome the education deficit that our democracy has inherited. The IEB will work closely with the QCTO to ensure that learners, providers and industry are provided with information about the curriculum and the assessment processes. This information will be made available shortly on the IEB website (www.ieb.co.za) under the heading of Foundational Learning Competence in the Adult section of the website.

What is Foundational Learning Competence (FLC)?

Foundational Learning Competence is a part qualification consisting of two learning areas: Communications and Mathematical Literacy. It describes the minimum competence needed in these two key areas that is required by people to function optimally in the world of work. The FLC describes the minimum competence required of learners to deal successfully with occupational learning at NQF Levels 2-4.

The school-leaving qualification, the National Senior Certificate, is registered at NQF Level 4. Hence the Foundational Learning Competence addresses the needs of learners in the occupational qualifications that are registered on the NQF at Level 2, 3 and 4 i.e. below Grade 12.

The Foundational Learning Competence is a compulsory part of all new qualifications developed under the auspices of the Quality Council for Trades and Occupations (QCTO) at NQF levels 3 and 4. This does not mean that developers of qualifications at NQF Level 2 cannot include Foundational Learning as a requirement. It has replaced the 'fundamentals' in Mathematics and Communications that were required previously in all qualifications at NQF Levels 1 to 4.

It is a part qualification registered at NQF Level 2. It has a credit value of 40, 20 for Foundational Learning Competence in Communications and 20 for Foundational Learning Competence in Mathematical Literacy.

There are three documents that describe the learning required for the FLC, namely the Foundational Learning Competence Part Qualification (which contains the Exit Level Outcomes and Associated Assessment Criteria for both Communications and Mathematical Literacy), the Foundational Learning Competence Communication in English: Curriculum Framework and the Foundational Learning Competence Communication in Mathematical Literacy: Curriculum Framework. These are registered with the QCTO, and provide detailed specifications of knowledge, content, applied skills, range statements and assessment requirements.

Providers may offer FLC learning programmes in order to prepare learners to write the FLC external assessment. Programme development must be done in relation to the curriculum frameworks and compliance with these documents is an indicator in the provider accreditation process for this part qualification. Both curriculum framework documents are available on the IEB website.

What is the rationale for requiring learners to complete Foundational Learning Competence?

The skills developed in the two learning areas, Communications and Mathematical Literacy, have been identified as foundational for learners wanting to progress in their occupation and skills development.

There is ample research that shows that language proficiency is closely aligned to success in learning in other areas. Historical educational backlogs which resulted from an unfair education dispensation have resulted in many adult learners having a gap in their understanding of and ability to apply language and mathematical literacy concepts in the workplace. While learners may be ready for training at the required level in the technical or practical aspects of a qualification i.e. they are able to 'do', very often their language skills in English (normally the language of teaching and learning) are at a much lower level. This causes a lot of problems in relation to dealing with the theoretical concepts in the learning material and the acquisition of new skills and knowledge in the occupational training. Similarly occupational training does require an understanding of numbers and knowledge of how to work with numbers especially in key areas of measurement and quantity.

In 2007 the process for the development of the Foundational Learning Competence (FLC) was begun by the Department of Labour. The FLC has replaced the fundamental unit standards in Mathematics and Communications that were required in all SAQA qualifications at NQF Levels 1-4. This decision was taken essentially because the fundamental unit standards were not done for a variety of reasons and had become a blockage in the system. A key reason for this was because learners were required to study mathematics or language skills that were unnecessary for their specific occupational needs. Hence there are many South Africans who have been denied qualifications in occupations and trades at NQF levels 2, 3 and 4 because they are unable to achieve the compulsory fundamental requirements at all four levels in the FET band for mathematical literacy and language.

The FLC is more focussed and directed to the minimum competence required in each area in order to function optimally in the world of work. It hence supports the objectives of the NQF that the fundamental unit standards were intended to achieve in terms of redress, access to meaningful learning, the achievement of qualifications and providing a basis for lifelong learning.

Once a learner has completed the FLC, s/he does not have to do it again even if the learner moves onto a qualification registered at a higher level, up to and including NQF Level 4.

If a specific area of study requires additional mathematical knowledge to that included in the Foundational Learning Competence in Mathematical Literacy, the qualification developers will need to include the additional mathematics requirements into the qualification itself. Similarly, qualifications that require additional competence in communications skills will need to include these into the qualification itself.

The *Foundational Learning* Competence is designed to address occupational needs and hence has no direct equivalent in the traditional schooling sector.

What content is covered in the Foundational Learning Competence curricula?

An outline of the content of the FLC is below:

Communication	Mathematical literacy
Writing	Number
Speaking and Listening	Finance
Visual Literacy	Data and chance
Language Structure and Usage	Measurement
Study Skills	Space and Shape
Workplace Terminology	Patterns and Relationships

Will the Foundational Learning Competence be sufficient for all occupational qualifications?

No. Some occupations or trades will definitely have specific requirements beyond the minimum competence, as covered by the Foundational Learning Competence curricula.

For example, Engineering needs mathematics such as basic calculus; Insurance or Banking may need specialist terminology or Financial Mathematics. Call centre qualifications may require communication skills in addition to the FLC Communications curriculum. Where this is the case, these requirements should be included in the actual Occupational Qualification as these specialisations are not part of the *Foundational Learning Competence Part Qualification*.

Where can I find the relevant documents for FLC?

There are three documents that describe the learning required

- Foundational Learning Competence Part Qualification which contains the Exit Level Outcomes and Associated Assessment Criteria for both Communications and Mathematical Literacy;
- Foundational Learning Competence Communication in English: Curriculum Framework;
- Foundational Learning Competence Mathematical Literacy: Curriculum Framework.

What are the timeframes for the IEB to introduce various processes?

The IEB is in a position to process the following:

- Applications to be placed on the database of providers;
- Applications from providers/organisations for FLC placement assessments;
- External assessments for FLC in both learning areas are available.

In respect of external assessments for FLC, it is advisable for providers/organisations to check that the relevant SETAs are in a position to recognise the FLC achievements of learners in the sector.

Until the assessment centres have been finalised, specific arrangements will have to be made with the IEB for the conduct of the external assessment. Once the assessment centres have been established, the IEB will be able to publish dates and times when external assessments will be available. The list of assessment centres will also be available.

The IEB has the data of learners who have successfully completed the FLC in pilot projects with various SETAs. The IEB will be able to upload this data to the QCTO and the NLRD as soon as the systems to do so are in place.

As soon as arrangements have been finalised, the IEB will publish a list of dates and times of information sessions as well as seminars to familiarise providers with the requirements of the curricula in each of the learning areas.

Where can we find out more about the FLC?

- From the IEB website (www.ieb.co.za under the Adult/Foundational Learning Competence section).
- From the IEB offices by calling 011-4839700 and speaking to one of the following:
 - Themba Ntsizwane (ntsizwanet@ieb.co.za)
 - Gigs Masala (masalab@ieb.co.za)
 - Vicky Masasanya (masasanyav@ieb.co.za)
- From the QCTO offices