



Training
Qualifications UK

Functional Skills

SLC: Controlled Environments

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Introduction

This document aims to provide a clear definition of the term 'Controlled Environment', offer direction as to what the key characteristics of controlled environments are and provide guidance on how to source and maintain an appropriately controlled environment to enable Speaking, Listening and Communication (SLC) assessments to take place.

First, let's make three things very clear:

1. For the purpose of this document, the term 'controlled environment' is defined as 'a suitable space where assessments can be undertaken safely with no disturbance or external interference.'
2. This relates only to the Speaking, Listening and Communication (SLC) element of Functional Skills qualifications in English.
3. The guidance provided here should be applied during face-to-face as well as online SLC assessment environments.
4. All Recognised centres and training providers must adhere to the detail of this document in order to ensure SLC assessments are valid, consistent, replicable and fair.

Characteristics/Requirements of Controlled Environments

- The allocated environment is a clearly designated area which is quiet and will be undisturbed for the entirety of the assessment - meaning no persons outside of those directly involved with the assessment will be present or have access to this space during the assessment.
- Where multiple learners are undertaking assessment, the environment must prevent learners from having access to or sight of other work or notes prepared by other learners, intentionally or otherwise.
- The environment should be sufficiently heated, with adequate lighting and ventilation
- The environment should be free from distraction including excess noise, enabling good quality audio recording to take place, as required.
- The environment should permit the assessment to take place safely without risk of harm or injury to those involved in the assessment.
- The environment should be accommodating of any agreed reasonable adjustments or special consideration requirements.
- The environment should provide ample space for the assessment activities to take place uninhibited.
- The environment should provide the required equipment for the assessment to be conducted in line with official guidance.

Best Practice Guidance

The following points represent additional guidance which is deemed as best practice for supporting assessments in controlled environments and must be followed where possible:

- display clear signage outside of the assessment environment (encouraging remote learners to do the same) to indicate an assessment is taking place and to restrict access
- communicate details of the assessment to wider staff to further protect the assessment environment
- ensure that the environment does not permit any assessment content to be overheard to support confidentiality, as required
- place a clock in a prominent position in clear sight of all learners, either in the room or visible in the background when delivering remote assessment. You may also wish to remind learners of the clock available on their laptop/PC or stopwatch software.

Validating Assessment Environments

Internal Assessors should make a visual check/inspection of the SLC environment to verify it meets the above outlined requirements. Where the assessment is being conducted as a face-to-face on-site assessment, this check will be undertaken in person.

Where the assessment is taking place as a remote assessment the assessor must ensure the learner enables their webcam on their device and conducts a sweep of the room to satisfy visually that the environment meets the requirements. Additionally, the assessor can ask the learner to confirm that the requirements are met by making a verbal statement.

Statements may include (where relevant to the arrangement and as often as is necessary dependent on the number of learners involved):

- 'Can you confirm that you are the only person present?'
- 'Can you confirm that no other person currently has access to this room/area?'
- 'Can you confirm that you feel this assessment environment is suitable for your assessment to take place and that it will not cause any restrictions on your ability to perform to your best ability?'
- 'Can you confirm that this assessment environment is safe and free from harm?'

The responses to these statements will also enable the Internal Assessor to verify that the acoustics and audio recording will be sufficient.

Where an Internal Assessor (or the learner) does not feel that the allocated environment is conducive to enabling valid, safe and fair assessment to take place, they should be permitted to cancel and rearrange the assessment.