Understanding the CSPA literacy and numeracy assessment

What it is, how to prepare and what your result means.

Based on Skills SA's *Upfront Assessment of Need Guidelines*, Version 5 - October 2025. This is a student-friendly explainer, not an official Skills SA or ACER document.

EQC Institute requires ACSF exit level 3 in both reading and numeracy.

The CSPA is not a test you pass or fail.
It shows whether you need reading or maths support to succeed in your course. Do your honest best so any support you are offered actually fits you.

What the CSPA is

The Core Skills Profile for Adults (CSPA) is an online assessment from ACER. At EQC Institute you complete two parts: **reading** and **numeracy** (maths). Each part gives you a level from the Australian Core Skills Framework (ACSF).

- Each part takes about **30 minutes**, and there is **no time limit**.
- Reading and numeracy questions adjust to your answers, so some may feel easy and some hard. That is normal.
- Results are scored automatically.

When you will be asked to do it

- **Before you enrol,** after your suitability and support needs interview. At EQC Institute you go straight to the CSPA. There is no shorter check first.
- **During your course,** if the reading or maths becomes difficult.

You may not need it if you are enrolling in a skill set, or already hold a related Certificate IV or higher. If English is not your first language and your English skills are low, your provider will refer you for a free English assessment instead.

How to prepare

- **Try a practice assessment** at home. Ask EQC Institute for the link.
- **Plan breaks.** You can spread the parts across different times or days.
- **Tell your provider early** if you have a disability and may need adjustments.
- **Reschedule** if you are unwell or not ready on the day.

What happens on the day

Source: Appendix 1, printed pages 28-30.

Your CSPA must be supervised.
Under the South Australian Government's Skills SA rules, EQC Institute must supervise your CSPA. An EQC Institute staff member, or someone acting for us, will be with you for the whole assessment, in person or by video. This keeps the process fair and makes sure the result shows your own skills.

Practice assessments can be done at home on your own, but the real CSPA cannot. Before you submit, you will also be asked to confirm that you answered every question yourself.

Your supervisor can

- Show you how to use the calculator, change an answer or scroll the screen.
- Remind you to skip hard questions, take a break, or finish another day.
- Help you stop if you feel unwell or stressed.

Your supervisor cannot

- Read questions aloud, give hints, or tell you if an answer is right.
- Use your mouse or keyboard, or enter answers for you.

Put these away

Phones, smart watches, ear buds, books, dictionaries and translators. You can use pen and paper.

Understanding your results

Source: printed pages 14 and 16.

Your report shows an **exit level** for each part. EQC Institute checks it against the required level 3.

- **Level 3 or above in both:** you continue enrolling.
- **Below level 3 in either:** a Skills SA approved specialist looks at your results and recommends support. This does not mean you cannot enrol.

Your results last **12 months** with the same provider. If you change providers, you will usually be assessed again.

Check your readiness

Have I tried a practice assessment, do I know I need level 3 in reading and numeracy, and do I know I can take a break or stop if I need to?

If you need support

Source: Sections 4 and 5, printed pages 17-23.

If your result is below level 3 in reading or numeracy, you may be offered free support such as:

- Extra help from your training provider.
- A free foundation skills tutor.
- Up to 5 free foundation skills units alongside your course.
- A free foundation skills course, if you need more help.

Support can happen before your course, during it, or both.

Agreeing to support

Source: printed pages 13, 15, 18-19 and 21-22.

Any support recommended for you is a **condition of your subsidised training**. You agree to it in your Skills SA participant agreement.

- You must finish your support **before you finish your course**.
- If you say no to the support, you cannot start the subsidised course and must wait **3 months** to be reassessed with that provider.
- If you stop taking part, you lose your subsidy.

Check your readiness

Do I understand what support has been recommended, when it must be finished and what happens if I do not take part?

Need help?

Talk to your training provider early if anything about the CSPA worries you, or if transport, work, family or health make it hard to attend support. They can talk through your options.