



National Unit Specification: general information

UNIT PC Passport: Internet and On-line Communications
(SCQF level 5)

CODE F1FD 11

SUMMARY

This Unit is a mandatory Unit of PC Passport: Intermediate but can also be undertaken as a free-standing Unit.

This Unit is designed to introduce candidates to a range of internet tools used to access, retrieve and exchange information from the internet or an intranet. Candidates will use a range of e-mail features to send and receive messages. Candidates will also acquire routine skills in the use of hardware and software relating to on-line communication.

This Unit is suitable for anyone that wishes to develop skills in the routine use of internet and online communications.

OUTCOMES

- 1 Describe components, services and issues relating to the use of online communications.
- 2 Carry out searches for information using the internet/intranet.
- 3 Send and receive e-mail using routine internet/intranet facilities.
- 4 Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of a variety of online communication methods.

RECOMMENDED ENTRY

While entry is at the discretion of the centre, it would be beneficial if candidates had previous knowledge or experience of the internet and/or basic IT skills. This may be evidenced by possession of:

- ◆ PC Passport Introduction to Internet and On-line Communications (SCQF level 4)
- ◆ PC Passport Introduction to IT Systems (SCQF level 4)

Administrative Information

Superclass: CB

Publication date: August 2010

Source: Scottish Qualifications Authority

Version: 02

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National Unit Specification: general information (cont)

UNIT PC Passport: Internet and On-line Communications (SCQF level 5)

- ◆ PC Passport Introduction to IT Software and Presenting Information (SCQF level 4)

or similar qualifications or experience.

CREDIT VALUE

1 credit at Intermediate 2 (6 SCQF credit points at SCQF level 5*)

**SCQF credit points are used to allocate credit to qualifications in the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF). Each qualification in the Framework is allocated a number of SCQF credit points at an SCQF level. There are 12 SCQF levels, ranging from Access 1 to Doctorates.*

CORE SKILLS

There is no automatic certification of Core Skills in this Unit.

The Unit provides opportunities for candidates to develop aspects of the following Core Skills:

- ◆ Information Technology (SCQF level 5)
- ◆ Communication (SCQF level 5)

These opportunities are highlighted in the Support Notes of this Unit Specification.

National Unit Specification: statement of standards

UNIT PC Passport: Internet and On-line Communications (SCQF level 5)

Acceptable performance in this Unit will be the satisfactory achievement of the standards set out in this part of the Unit Specification. All sections of the statement of standards are mandatory and cannot be altered without reference to the Scottish Qualifications Authority.

OUTCOME 1

Describe components, services and issues relating to the use of online communications.

Performance Criteria

- (a) Describe connection components and their features.
- (b) Describe e-mail problems and solutions accurately.
- (c) Describe a range of internet applications and services.
- (d) Describe factors affecting speed of internet connections.
- (e) Describe security risks, current laws and guidelines relating to the internet/intranet and e-mail.

OUTCOME 2

Carry out searches for information using the internet/intranet.

Performance Criteria

- (a) Access websites using Uniform Resource Locators (URLs).
- (b) Locate desired information using an efficient and effective search strategy.
- (c) Locate relevant information using internet/intranet features efficiently.

OUTCOME 3

Send and receive e-mail using routine internet/intranet facilities.

Performance Criteria

- (a) E-mail is used to communicate effectively, securely and responsibly within legal guidelines.
- (b) E-mail features are used efficiently and effectively.

OUTCOME 4

Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of a variety of online communication methods.

Performance Criteria

- (a) Investigate a range of online communications methods.
- (b) Describe the features and suitable use of online communication methods.
- (c) Make effective use of an online communication method for exchanging information.

National Unit Specification: statement of standards (cont)

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EVIDENCE REQUIREMENTS FOR THIS UNIT

Evidence is required that candidates have achieved all Outcomes and Performance Criteria.

Candidates are encouraged to use the internet in any research, etc however the evidence produced must be the candidate's own words. Assessors should assure themselves of the authenticity of candidate's evidence.

Written and/or oral recorded evidence and performance evidence is required which demonstrates that the candidate has achieved the requirements of all of the Outcomes and Performance Criteria.

Written and/or oral recorded evidence is required which demonstrates that the candidate has achieved Outcome 1 to the standard specified in the Outcome and Performance Criteria. The evidence for this Outcome should be obtained under controlled, supervised conditions. The assessment should be closed-book and last no more than 45 minutes.

The instrument of assessment will provide opportunities for each of the Outcomes to be fulfilled by means of sampling across the range of the content of Outcome 1. Where re-assessment is required, it should contain a different sample across the range of content of the Outcome. Achievement could be decided using a cut-off score. Each sample must include the following:

- ◆ Features of three components of an internet/intranet and e-mail connection.
- ◆ Two e-mail problems.
- ◆ Two solutions to e-mail problems.
- ◆ Two factors affecting performance of internet connections.
- ◆ Three internet applications and services.
- ◆ One of each of the following: security risk, current legislation and guidelines relating to the internet/intranet and e-mail.

Performance evidence supplemented by an assessor observation checklist is required which demonstrates that the candidate has achieved Outcomes 2 and 3 to the standard specified in the Outcomes and Performance Criteria. This evidence will be gathered under supervised open-book conditions. The evidence may be produced over an extended period of time.

In addition candidates are required to demonstrate that they can:

- ◆ Locate three web pages that contain information that relates to different contexts and covers at least three of the defined types of information (text, number, graphic or sound). Each search must involve a minimum of two search criteria. The information located and method used for location must be different on each assessment occasion. Searching will include accessing websites using a URL, use of an appropriate search engine and appropriate keywords and queries; carrying out searches efficiently using meta search engines, directories, wild cards, AND or NOT (Boolean notation), natural search methods.
- ◆ Use a browser's history facilities to re-visit websites from various dates using bookmarks or favourites and software settings.
- ◆ Review sources and information to help choose what is most relevant, and to decide when sources and information have been found.

National Unit Specification: statement of standards (cont)

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- ◆ Save (download) pages found during the searches to an appropriate folder(s).
- ◆ Provide written and/or oral recorded evidence of the search strategy.
- ◆ Carry out a range of e-mail activities including:
 - Use more advanced facilities including: add a signature, set the priority of messages.
 - Send messages to cc and bcc recipients.
 - Set up groups for recipients of e-mails.
 - Send messages with and without attachments to groups of people using groups created in an address book.
 - Receive e-mails with attachments and download the file.
 - Compress and decompress e-mail attachments.
 - Forward messages with additional comments added.
 - Format e-mails by changing type size, alignment, numbering and indents.
 - Archive e-mails where necessary, such as by using folders and subfolders.

Throughout the practical activities in this Unit candidates are required to comply, at all times, with the following:

- ◆ Adhere to the rules of ‘netiquette’.
- ◆ Anti-virus and firewall practices.
- ◆ Acceptable use policies for communicating over the internet and intranet.
- ◆ Avoid possible sources of virus infection.

Written and/or oral recorded evidence and product evidence is required to demonstrate that the candidate has achieved Outcome 4.

Candidates are required to investigate a minimum of **three** and use **one** of the online communications methods from the following list and produce a short report of approximately 500 words detailing the features and suitability of use of the investigated methods. The report should also include a description of the online communication method used:

- ◆ instant messaging
- ◆ internet telephony
- ◆ forums (bulletin boards and community services (such as MSN, Yahoo and Google groups)
- ◆ blogs
- ◆ wiki
- ◆ picture sharing
- ◆ any other appropriate online communications method

The Assessment Support Pack (ASP) for this Unit provides sample assessment materials including assessor checklists, practical tasks and an instrument of assessment for the knowledge and understanding of Outcome 1. Centres wishing to develop their own assessments should refer to the Assessment Support Pack to ensure a comparable standard.

National Unit Specification: support notes

UNIT PC Passport: Internet and On-line Communications (SCQF level 5)

This part of the Unit Specification is offered as guidance. The support notes are not mandatory.

While the exact time allocated to this Unit is at the discretion of the centre, the notional design length is 40 hours.

GUIDANCE ON THE CONTENT AND CONTEXT FOR THIS UNIT

This Unit may be delivered as a stand-alone Unit or in combination with other Units as part a group of Units making up an award, eg PC Passport: Intermediate.

This Unit is not an introductory Unit. A candidate undertaking this Unit is likely to possess the following basic skills of using a computer operating system efficiently and effectively to:

- ◆ navigate, create and delete, rename, move and copy folders and files
- ◆ save web pages
- ◆ print web pages
- ◆ open and close a browser
- ◆ open multiple instances of a browser
- ◆ download a file
- ◆ back-up a file
- ◆ open and close an e-mail package

Candidates are also expected to possess a basic knowledge of the factors affecting the performance of an internet connection.

The term ‘internet’ is used to represent the full range of internet services which includes the world wide web (www), e-mail, file transfer, newsgroups and chat. This Unit can also be delivered using an intranet within a centre where there is limited availability of internet connections. The assessor must ensure that the intranet content and facilities are sufficient to satisfy the Unit content.

This Unit maps to the National Occupational Standards (NOS) for IT Users as specified by the Sector Skills Council (e-Skills UK). The competences included in this Unit map to level 2 Areas of Competence in the following areas of NOS:

- ◆ Internets and Intranets
- ◆ Use IT to Exchange Information

Full assessment coverage of NOS is detailed in the Assessment Support Pack for this Unit. Further information regarding NOS can be found at www.e-skills.com.

National Unit Specification: support notes (cont)

UNIT PC Passport: Internet and On-line Communications (SCQF level 5)

Outcome 1

This Outcome relates to the knowledge that candidates must possess in order to perform routine tasks related to the internet/intranet. Routine tasks are those tasks required from a competent internet user in the workplace. Candidates should be aware of the differences between the internet and local intranets and that both can offer similar services. It is not necessary to make use of both the internet and an intranet.

Components of an internet, intranet and e-mail connection and their features could include the following:

- ◆ ISP (Internet Service Provider)
- ◆ Firewalls
- ◆ A communication link (such as a telephone line or network cable)
- ◆ An internet access device (such as a PC connected directly or indirectly to the internet)
- ◆ A valid user account (which may be with an ISP or an internal network account)

Simple problems and solutions with regard to e-mail could include possible sources of viruses, worms and e-mail spam. Candidates should be aware of methods of maintaining data and e-mail integrity by use of anti-virus and anti-spam software along with regular back-up. Avoiding possible sources of virus infection, eg not downloading and running an executable file.

Internet applications or services, will include e-mail, www, search, chat, forum, newsgroup, blog or wiki, photo sharing, spam filtering, back-up services, history log, temporary internet files.

Candidates will become familiar with the types of problems that they might expect when using the internet/intranet. It is not expected that they will experience problems but should be aware of how to resolve simple problems.

Candidates should be aware of performance factors relating to online communications these include:

- ◆ client-side factors (such as the speed of the local internet device — such as a PC)
- ◆ server-side factors (such as the speed of the remote server)
- ◆ communication factors (such as bandwidth)

Candidates are only required to know the effect of each of these components on internet connection speed. It is not necessary, at this level, for the candidate to have a detailed understanding.

Candidates are expected to describe the range of internet applications or services fully. Although candidates should be able to get as much practical experience of the applications or services, it is not necessary to gain practical experience of all. However, the candidate must be able to describe each method.

At this level, candidates are expected to possess a wide vocabulary of terms (relating to the internet) and be familiar with a wide range of routine terms used to describe hardware, software and the internet.

National Unit Specification: support notes (cont)

UNIT PC Passport: Internet and On-line Communications (SCQF level 5)

Candidates should have an awareness of the security risks of using the internet, intranet and e-mail which include hacking, viruses, worms and spam and be familiar with laws and guidelines that affect the internet, including the Computer Misuse Act, Copyright, Design and Patents Act, Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act and Data Protection Act. Candidates are expected to know about (and adhere to) security policies, and be familiar with the various tools that are used to ensure security (such as anti-virus and anti-spam software and the need for regular back-ups).

Note: Candidates are not expected to know about the technical aspects of anti-virus and anti-spam software or back-ups; they are only required to know about the purpose of each and their major functional characteristics.

Candidates are required to know the difference between ‘good’ and ‘bad’ passwords, and appreciate the importance of regularly changing their passwords.

Outcome 2

This Outcome relates to finding information on the internet. The type of information that candidates are expected to locate should be familiar (but non-trivial) and relate to their personal and vocational interests. At least one of the searches should be for a genuine reason.

The conditions of assessment should be recorded in terms of working environment, degree of difficulty, expected time to complete and standard of work required. This is to allow for repeat assessment, if required, to be carried out under the same conditions.

In Outcome 2, candidates are expected to use URLs to access websites. Candidates must be able to recognise the component parts of a URL and be able to access a range of websites by entering their URLs. It is not acceptable for candidates to require assistance or require repeated attempts at entering a URL.

Candidates are required to adopt a search strategy and apply this to finding appropriate information. A search strategy typically includes: choosing a search engine; choosing appropriate keywords and queries; carrying out searches efficiently using meta search engines, directories, wild cards, AND or NOT (Boolean notation), natural search methods. It is not acceptable at this level for candidates to simply issue a number of individual words, roughly connected with the target information. However, it is not required that candidates carry out very complex searches, involving long strings of keywords connected by complex operators. For example, if looking for details on specific Olympic Games, ‘Olympic Games’ would not be acceptable, where as ‘Olympic Games AND Beijing NOT cycling’ would be better. Candidates are required to locate a range of information types (ie text, number, graphic and sound).

National Unit Specification: support notes (cont)

UNIT PC Passport: Internet and On-line Communications (SCQF level 5)

Candidates will make use of the following internet/intranet features: bookmarks or favourites, browser controls, hyperlinks, history and software settings. Bookmarks or favourites should be used to record and access web addresses. At this level, candidates should organise the bookmarks or favourites into folders and sub-folders so it would not be acceptable for them to create a long list of unorganised URLs. Candidates should be able to use the browser navigation controls — back, forward and home and be able to use them effectively and efficiently to move between pages in a website. Similarly, candidates are required to recognise and use embedded hyperlinks. Candidates should also be able to use a browser's history facilities to re-visit websites from previous searches. Candidates are expected to know the purpose of the history feature and be able to use it to re-visit websites. They should also know how to delete the history log.

Outcome 3

This Outcome relates to using the internet or an intranet to communicate using e-mail.

Candidates will acquire skills to enable them to use e-mail to communicate effectively, securely and responsibly within legal guidelines.

Candidates should be aware of acceptable use policies for communicating over the internet and an intranet. Most centres will have an acceptable use policy and candidates are required to adhere to this. Responsible use also relates to the candidate's conduct whilst they are online. Secure use means that candidate activities do not jeopardise the security of the centre/workplace. For example, candidates are expected to know about (and comply with) anti-virus and firewall practices; they are expected to know about (and avoid) possible sources of virus infection (such as downloading and running an executable file).

Candidates will use e-mail effectively and efficiently. Effective use means that candidates can use all of the e-mail features stated (within the Evidence Requirements for this Unit section) without assistance. Efficient means that candidates can perform these tasks within a reasonable amount of time.

Outcome 4

This Outcome relates to current online communication methods. Candidates should investigate the current communication methods, eg instant messaging, internet phones, forums (bulletin boards and community services such as MSN groups) and be able to describe each method fully. Where possible, candidates should be given access to as many different online communication methods as possible.

GUIDANCE ON LEARNING AND TEACHING APPROACHES FOR THIS UNIT

A practical, hands-on approach to learning should be adopted. The emphasis should be on experiential learning. Terminology and underpinning knowledge should be introduced in a practical context.

Throughout this Unit candidates should be made aware of personal safety issues associated with internet use.

National Unit Specification: support notes (cont)

UNIT PC Passport: Internet and On-line Communications (SCQF level 5)

The actual distribution of time between Outcomes is at the discretion of the centre. However, the following distribution and order is suggested:

Outcome 1	10 hours
Outcome 2	10 hours
Outcome 3	10 hours
Outcome 4	10 hours

The allocated timings allow for assessment and re-assessment where required.

Throughout this Unit, candidate activities should relate to their personal or vocational interests. For example, candidates should be permitted to search for information which reflects their interests rather than searches prescribed by their assessor.

Their choice of search should be genuine (rather than contrived) and seek to gain some valid information on a topic of genuine interest to the candidate.

Candidates have to be able to investigate and describe current online communication methods. Ideally, practical tasks should be created to assist in the learning of this Performance Criteria. Candidates must use at least one of the communication methods. The internet could be used as a research tool to enable candidates to search for information on current communication methods.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR CORE SKILL DEVELOPMENT

This Unit involves candidates:

- ◆ Using the internet or an intranet to carry out searches to extract and present relevant information which may provide an opportunity to gather evidence towards aspects of the IT Core Skill.
- ◆ Preparing a short report based on research carried out for Outcome 4. This may provide opportunities for gathering evidence towards aspects of the Communication Core Skill.

GUIDANCE ON APPROACHES TO ASSESSMENT FOR THIS UNIT

It may be appropriate for some of the evidence for this Unit to be produced using e-assessment provided the national standard is applied and the conditions of assessment are consistent for all candidates. This may take the form of e-testing (for knowledge and understanding) and/or e-portfolios (for practical abilities).

If a centre is presenting Outcome 1 of these assessments online the following assessment methods, where appropriate, may be selected:

- ◆ Multiple choice
- ◆ Drag and drop
- ◆ Multiple response
- ◆ Mix and match
- ◆ a combination of the above

National Unit Specification: support notes (cont)

UNIT PC Passport: Internet and On-line Communications (SCQF level 5)

It is expected that the questions will be of the multiple-choice variety. Centres may consider the use of alternative questions types, particularly if using Computer Assisted Assessment approaches. However, care should be taken that the questions are valid and at an appropriate level. The use of simple true/false question responses is unlikely to achieve this.

The Assessment Support Pack for this Unit provides sample assessment material. Centres wishing to develop their own assessments should refer to the Assessment Support Pack to ensure a comparable standard.

For Outcome 1 a suitable assessment would be an objective test which demonstrates that the candidate has the required knowledge. The evidence for this Outcome should be obtained under controlled, supervised conditions. The assessment should be closed-book. Achievement could be decided by the use of a cut-off score.

Where re-assessment of knowledge and understanding is required the questions presented to the candidate must be different on each assessment occasion.

There is an opportunity to use an online assessment environment for knowledge and understanding of Outcome 1.

If possible the searches in Outcome 2 should be genuine and not contrived. It is suggested that the searches undertaken in Outcome 2 be used to form the basis of Outcome 3. Information required for Outcome 4 can also be used as search criteria for Outcome 2.

If a candidate is undertaking this Unit in conjunction with either *PC Passport: IT Software — Word Processing and Presenting Information (SCQF level 5)* or *PC Passport: IT Software — Word Processing Spreadsheets and Database (SCQF level 5)* there may be opportunities to search for the information required for these Units.

The assessment of practical skills throughout this Unit, and listed on the checklist, may be demonstrated in the context of a single extended task, or in the context of a number of smaller tasks. The candidate will normally demonstrate the skills during the teaching and learning activities of the Unit, rather than as separate assessment activities.

For the e-mail assessment the assessor could send the candidate an e-mail requesting a copy of the three files obtained in the search exercise. The candidate would reply to this e-mail attaching compressed versions of the required files. The candidate's e-mail should include at least three different formats and be marked as priority.

Evidence of practical competence could be stored in an e-portfolio. At the completion of this Unit the portfolio should contain a range of evidence drawn from the Evidence Requirements for each Outcome.

This evidence material may be stored in paper or electronic format.

If this Unit is undertaken in the workplace there may be opportunities for candidates to gather evidence in day to day workplace activities.

National Unit Specification: support notes (cont)

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Opportunities for the use of e-assessment

E-assessment may be appropriate for some assessments in this Unit. By e-assessment we mean assessment which is supported by Information and Communication Technology (ICT), such as e-testing or the use of e-portfolios or e-checklists. Centres which wish to use e-assessment must ensure that the national standard is applied to all candidate evidence and that conditions of assessment as specified in the Evidence Requirements are met, regardless of the mode of gathering evidence. Further advice is available in *SQA Guidelines on Online Assessment for Further Education (AA1641, March 2003)*, *SQA Guidelines on e-assessment for Schools (BD2625, June 2005)*.

DISABLED CANDIDATES AND/OR THOSE WITH ADDITIONAL SUPPORT NEEDS

The additional support needs of individual candidates should be taken into account when planning learning experiences, selecting assessment instruments, or considering alternative Outcomes for Units. Further advice can be found in the SQA document *Guidance on Assessment Arrangements for Candidates with Disabilities and/or Additional Support Needs (www.sqa.org.uk)*.

History of changes:

Version	Description of change	Date
02	Evidence Requirements clarified and/or details of NOS mapping inserted	10/08/2010