



National Unit Specification

General information

Unit title: Developing Essential Skills (SCQF level 5)

Unit code: HC4P 45

Superclass: HB

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Unit purpose

This Unit is designed to enable learners to develop their skills in self-reflection and to understand the importance of improving their Essential Skills for a job role of interest to them. Learners will develop self-autonomy in the recording of their learning by identifying their strengths and areas for improvement by planning and implementing strategies to develop their skills. They will also create a skills profile to document their experiences by reviewing their progress.

On successful completion of the Unit the learner will be able to:

- 1 Identify and improve own Essential Skills and those required for specific job roles.
- 2 Plan and demonstrate own Essential Skills development.
- 3 Reflect on own effectiveness in planning Essential Skills development.

Credit points and level

1 National Unit credit at SCQF level 5: (6 SCQF credit points at SCQF level 5)

Recommended entry to the Unit

Entry is at the discretion of the centre.

National Unit Specification: General information (cont)

Unit title: Developing Essential Skills (SCQF LEVEL 5)

Core Skills

Opportunities to develop aspects of Core Skills are highlighted in the Support Notes for this Unit specification.

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

Context for delivery

If this Unit is delivered as part of a Group Award, it is recommended that it should be taught and assessed within the subject area of the Group Award to which it contributes.

If this Unit is delivered as part of a Group Award or alongside a Group Award, it is recommended that it should be taught and assessed within the same subject area the learners are studying.

This Unit can be used alongside any learning programme, as it requires learners to reflect on the skills they are developing across all of their learning activities. It encourages learners to identify skills they have already developed, skills they can develop further, to identify opportunities for developing new skills and identifying skills they will need in specific job roles.

Throughout the delivery of this Unit, the transferrable nature of the skills learners are developing should be stressed. Learners should be made aware of the generic nature of the Essential Skills list and the requirement for the same types of skills across many different vocational contexts.

Centres may wish to use skills profiling tools, either tools that have been designed locally or more widely available methods of recording progress across a range of skills areas. For example, some centres may use electronic approaches, such as those available through www.wudwwug.com, Moodle, Mahara, Glow, SOLAR, and so forth.

Equality and inclusion

This Unit specification has been designed to ensure that there are no unnecessary barriers to learning or assessment. The individual needs of learners should be taken into account when planning learning experiences, selecting assessment methods or considering alternative evidence.

Further advice can be found on our website www.sqa.org.uk/assessmentarrangements.

National Unit Specification: Statement of standards

Unit title: Developing Essential Skills (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 SQA.

Outcome 1

Identify and improve own Essential Skills and those required for specific job roles.

Performance Criteria

- (a) Identify own strengths and areas for improvement in relation to Essential Skills required by employers.
- (b) Plan approaches for the development of own Essential Skills to cover areas where improvement is needed.

Outcome 2

Plan and demonstrate own Essential Skills development.

Performance Criteria

- (a) Plan and implement the development of own Essential Skills.
- (b) Demonstrate own Essential Skills development.
- (c) Monitor and record own development of Essential Skills in line with the plan.

Outcome 3

Reflect on own effectiveness in planning Essential Skills development.

Performance Criteria

- (a) Reflect on effectiveness in planning and developing Essential Skills for specific job roles.
- (b) Review own progress in improving skills in relation to specific job roles during the programme.

National Unit Specification: Statement of standards (cont)

Unit title: Developing Essential Skills (SCQF LEVEL 5)

Evidence Requirements for this Unit

Evidence is required to demonstrate that learners have achieved all Outcomes and Performance Criteria.

The evidence will be gathered in open-book conditions at appropriate points throughout the duration of the learning programme. It should be noted that some learners may be able to highlight skills developed outside their learning centre during community and social activities as well as those developed during organised learning activities.

Evidence for Outcomes 1, 2 and 3 will be gathered in a learner's portfolio which will include a reflective log. Evidence could be stored as hard copy documents or as electronic files. Use could be made of appropriate applications such as www.wudwwug.com, which allow learners to log and record progress against specific skills.

It is the centre's responsibility to ensure that the evidence collected is the learner's own work.

Outcome 1

Written and/or oral evidence.

Learners must:

- ◆ investigate the Essential Skills needed in at least three specific job roles they may be interested in as a future career.
- ◆ through their investigations, identify a minimum of fifteen Essential Skills that may be required by employers for those job roles.
- ◆ identify their own strengths and areas for improvement by identifying the Essential Skills they have and the Essential Skills required in the specific job roles they have investigated.

Teachers/lecturers will assist learners in their selection of appropriate job roles to investigate. Teachers/lecturers will also help learners identify their strengths and areas for improvement in relation to the Essential Skills required.

National Unit Specification: Statement of standards (cont)

Unit title: Developing Essential Skills (SCQF level 5)

Outcome 2

Written and/or oral evidence.

Learners must:

- ◆ identify and record occasions where Essential Skills will be developed naturally during their learning programme. These should be naturally occurring opportunities during their programme, where particular skills can be practiced and/or improved.
- ◆ retain evidence that shows at least four recorded opportunities to develop a new Essential Skill or Essential Skills.
- ◆ keep a reflective log throughout the learning schedule of the Unit/Course. The log must record a minimum of 30 occasions when specific skills were developed and/or reinforced.

Teachers/lecturers will assist learners in their selection of appropriate job roles to investigate. Teachers/lecturers will also help learners identify their strengths and areas for improvement in relation to the Essential Skills required.

Outcome 3

Written and/or oral evidence:

Learners must:

- ◆ identify the new or existing skills they have developed since they started keeping their reflective log.
- ◆ compare their new skills profile with the skills profile they will need in at least three specific job roles.
- ◆ reflect on the progress they have made and describe at least three strengths and three areas for improvement regarding their own efforts to improve their skills.

Teachers/lecturers will assist learners in the identification of strengths and areas for improvement and this must focus on the effort made to improve skills rather than the skills themselves.

National Unit: Support Notes

Unit title: Developing Essential Skills (SCQF level 5)

Unit Support Notes are offered as guidance and 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

The Unit will ensure that every learner is equipped with and recognises the value of skills for learning, life and work. Given that no job is for life and we cannot predict the jobs of the future, developing Essential Skills is more important than ever. This Unit will help learners recognise the importance of skills development and help prepare them for the transition to employment.

A key issue employers have raised is that new graduates/leavers are unable to articulate details of the skills they actually possess. Keeping a reflective log will enable learners to write about and reflect on skills achieved to date, thereby helping them understand the broader application of the skills, and giving them a tool to retrieve and recall their personal development.

This Unit could be included in the optional section of any new Group Award framework or can be taken as a stand-alone Unit. It will work better if it is incorporated across the whole curriculum and is seen as part of academic guidance for the duration of the Course. Learners can be given a specific time allocation within their timetable to reflect on their personal skills development with teacher/lecturer support.

The Essential Skills should be developed throughout all forms of teaching and learning although the individual skills themselves may not be the focus of assessment. Learners and teachers/lecturers will benefit from skills conversations occurring, as they will help learners realise the breadth of their learning, and help teachers/lecturers realise that they are all 'Teachers of Skills'.

Signposting and discussing the wider Essential Skills acquisition provides a rich context for learning and self-reflecting on what has been learned, allowing the individual to better understand the distance they are travelling and what they have actually learned so they can apply skills in different contexts. Although learner groups may encounter the same delivery methods and the same assessment during a programme of study, at an individual level the learner experience will be different and it should be recognised that the same learning activity can provide many different learning experiences and developments.

National Unit: Support Notes (cont)

Unit title: Developing Essential Skills (SCQF level 5)

Outcome 1

Learners will improve their understanding and learn about the importance of Essential Skills in today's employment market. They will be given time to become familiar with various Essential Skills and relate them to specific job roles. The learner will also have to reflect on their own personal strengths with regard to a selected group of Essential Skills, with some assistance from their teacher/lecturer. It will be important for the teacher/lecturer to direct learners carefully and diplomatically but honestly in identifying their strengths and areas for development.

Learners will gather information from various sources to find out about what sort of employment they are interested in and the skills required for the type of employment opportunities they have chosen. For example, sources might include:

- ◆ contacts with employers or voluntary agencies
- ◆ internet
- ◆ job adverts
- ◆ Skills Development Scotland, sector skills councils or other government bodies

For more information see:

<http://www.wudwwwug.com/>
<http://www.myworldofwork.co.uk/>

Outcome 1 will introduce learners to the concept of Essential Skills which can be defined as the more obvious skills of *Communication, Numeracy and Information and Communication Technology (ICT)* alongside a wide range of broad softer skills (such as, Empathy, Flexibility and Team Skills). These broad softer skills form part of most specialist vocational learning programmes and are developed throughout learning experiences but rarely assessed or recognised, partly due to the focus of unitised learning but also due to the difficulty of observing and assessing some of the more intangible skills.

It will be important for each centre to define a list of skills that learners must consider within the context of this Unit, however, the exact range of skills and the name and definition given to each skill may vary from one centre to another. Obviously, it will be important to provide a list of skills that offers a wide enough selection for learners to differentiate but narrow enough to be manageable. The following list of possible Essential Skills is therefore given for illustrative purposes only and should not be seen as either exhaustive or definitive:

National Unit: Support Notes (cont)

Unit title: Developing Essential Skills (SCQF level 5)

Visual Interpretation	Communication	Literacy	Perspective
Summarising	Focus	Presentation	Social awareness
Perception	Analysis	Observation	Self-awareness
Peer Evaluation	Working with Others	Logical thinking	Objectivity
ICT	Team Skills	Leadership	Consideration
Psychomotor	Planning	Planning implementation	Environmental awareness
Designing	Practical Application	Evaluation	Coaching
Understanding	Enterprise	Perseverance	Empathy
Numeracy	Creativity	Independent expression	Integrity
Research	Problem-solving	Flexibility	Community involvement

The above list has been taken from www.wudwwug.com and a list of descriptions/prompts to go with each of the Essential Skills shown above is included as Appendix 1 to this document.

Outcome 2

Learners will improve their understanding and learn about the importance of their personal skills development. They will be given time to reflect, discuss and record the skills and attributes they have enhanced or acquired.

The learner will identify the various Essential Skills they are developing in the diverse learning activities they are involved with and articulate in a personal reflective log, their ongoing skills progression. The learner should seek advice at every appropriate opportunity to reassure themselves that they are inputting appropriate information that relates accurately to the skill they have identified.

It is important that learners understand their own distance travelled and what they have learned so that they can apply it in a different context. The reflective log should allow learners to record their own learning and learners should be encouraged to use vocabulary and terminology that will be understood by employers in the vocational sector(s) they have investigated.

This Outcome will be assessed by a reflective log that is based on the learner's experience across all learning activities and subjects. The reflective log will record evidence that the learner can produce a reflective account of his/her own experiences and learning mapped to related Essential Skills.

National Unit: Support Notes (cont)

Unit title: Developing Essential Skills (SCQF level 5)

Outcome 3

In this Outcome, learners are expected to reflect on their success in developing the skills needed for specific job roles (these should have been identified already for PC (a) in Outcome 1). Where learners have a clear preference for a particular career route, the skills they focus on should be appropriate to the job roles in that career area.

After completing Outcome 2 and reflecting on the skills they have developed throughout their course the learner will be given the opportunity to reflect on their personal progress. The learner will identify areas they have progressed and areas they need to further develop. The learner should be in a position to identify their personal strengths and areas for improvement with regard to Essential Skills and evaluate how they have progressed throughout the Unit.

After they have completed the Unit, learners may want to go on to reflect on why the development of their Essential Skills makes them more employable and consider specific examples.

Guidance on approaches to delivery of this Unit

All learning activities will provide opportunities to develop Essential Skills. The main role of the teacher/lecturer is to offer support and guidance to facilitate one to one or group discussion on the topics highlighted in each Outcome. Learners must have the opportunity to do things for themselves, to make choices and decisions, to interact with others and discover the value and importance of skills development in the world of employment.

All learning activities should be discussed and opportunities where skills development occurs must be highlighted.

The identification of skills and the descriptions used by learners in their reflective accounts of skills development may provide an excellent source of material for those who want to create or update a CV.

Guidance on approaches to assessment of this Unit

Evidence can be generated using different types of assessment. The following are suggestions only. There may be other methods that would be more suitable to learners.

Centres are reminded that prior verification of centre-devised assessments would help to ensure that the national standard is being met. Where learners experience a range of assessment methods, this helps them to develop different skills that should be transferable to work or further and higher education.

National Unit: Support Notes (cont)

Unit title: Developing Essential Skills (SCQF level 5)

Centres may use the Instruments of Assessment which are considered by teachers/lecturers to be the most appropriate. Examples of Instruments of Assessment which could be used are as follows:

Outcome 1, 2 and 3

- ◆ A personal portfolio which could include a reflective log (written and/or oral) where the learner identifies at least fifteen appropriate Essential Skills required in specific job roles and records the importance and value of these skills. Personal strengths will be highlighted within this portfolio and these skills will be linked to specific job roles.
- ◆ The portfolio could capture personal reflection for a minimum of 30 instances where the learners record their progress by using a series of prompts and input these skills into their personal profile page as they are developed. As part of this, they must record at least 4 instances where the learner developed new skills.
- ◆ The final part of the portfolio could capture their distance travelled where their personal progression will be highlighted and their personal employment development opportunities discussed and recorded. This could be assessed through a presentation that learners deliver to and discuss with their teacher/lecturer, or through learners writing a personal statement and discussing their strengths and areas for improvement with their teacher/lecturer.

Opportunities for 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 social software. Centres which wish to use e-assessment must ensure that the national standard is applied to all learner evidence and that conditions of assessment as specified in the Evidence Requirements are met, regardless of the mode of gathering evidence. The most up-to-date guidance on the use of e-assessment to support SQA's qualifications is available at www.sqa.org.uk/e-assessment.

Opportunities for developing Core and other Essential Skills

There is no automatic certification of Core Skills or Core Skill components in this Unit. The completion of this Unit will highlight, through self-reflection, the learner's progress against all of the Core and Essential Skills. The learner will record their progress in a reflective log which will provide an educational record of all the instances where they feel they have developed these Core and Essential Skills.

History of changes to Unit

Version	Description of change	Date

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General information for learners

Unit title: Developing Essential Skills (SCQF level 5)

This section will help you decide whether this is the Unit for you by explaining what the Unit is about, what you should know or be able to do before you start, what you will need to do during the Unit and opportunities for further learning and employment.

What is this Unit about?

This Unit is intended to help you think about and identify the skills you are using and developing while you are completing a programme of learning. No matter what qualification you are doing, whether it's an academic subject, based in a classroom, or a practical subject based in a working environment, you will be developing skills over and above the specific subjects you are studying.

What do you have to do in this Unit?

Most learners will be expected to collect evidence for this Unit with a minimum of assistance from their tutor. Your tutor should provide you with some direction and explain what you have to do, but the Unit is based on your own reflection on what skills you have, what skills you feel need improving and what skills you may need in future job roles. To do this, you will be expected to keep a log in which you will need to write about:

- ◆ The skills you already have
- ◆ The skills needed for certain jobs you may like to do in future
- ◆ Opportunities you can identify where you could develop more skills
- ◆ Planning which approaches provide the best opportunities to develop these skills
- ◆ The full list of skills you can demonstrate during your learning programme
- ◆ How well you have done in developing your skills and implementing your plan
- ◆ Any gaps that may still exist between the skills you have developed and the skills you will need in certain jobs in future

Appendix 1: List of Essential Skills Descriptions/Prompts

Unit title: Developing Essential Skills (SCQF level 5)

Skill to be developed	Description/Prompt
Visual Interpretation	Being good at putting what you've seen into words. Being able to easily understand and describe relevant information from a diagram, line drawing, pattern, musical score, video, etc.
Summarising	Being able to convey the relevant points from a source of information, and to clearly put these across to others in an edited form.
Perception	Listening to/Watching a skill or task being described/shown, and being able to learn how to do it yourself, and understand the meaning behind it.
Peer Evaluation	Being able to evaluate others, skills and work objectively.
ICT	Being able to use ICT hardware/software effectively.
Psychomotor	Demonstrating physical and practical skills. Competence with using types of machinery, apparatus, tools or instruments.
Designing	Being able to plan out systematically for a particular goal or effect.
Understanding	Being able to make sense of information, facts and ideas.
Numeracy	Demonstrate competence in the use of numbers and figures.
Research	Being able to systematically find out new facts or principles. Being able to find the right information that you need for a task.
Communication	Being able to put across information, ideas, in a way that's clear to others.
Focus	Being able to concentrate on the task at hand.
Analysis	Being able to look at a situation and study it fully, resolving its complexity into simple elements.
Working with Others	Being able to work collaboratively in a certain situation or task to concentrate on the task at hand.
Team Skills	Being able to work well with others in a group — knowing when to speak up, when to listen, and how best to help the group. Ability to negotiate effectively.
Planning	Being able to put together a systematic programme of work to achieve a task or goal.
Practical application	Being able to carry out effectively a task or goal from instruction.

Appendix 1: List of Essential Skills Descriptions/Prompts

Unit title: Developing Essential Skills (SCQF level 5)

Skill to be developed	Description/Prompt
Enterprise/Entrepreneurial skills	Demonstrate ingenuity and imagination in response to various tasks or goals.
Creativity	Being able to progress/offer an idea or task in an original way.
Problem-solving	Being able to come up and act on ideas to solve a situation.
Perspective	Being able to understand that there's more involved in a situation than it appears, and can take a mental step back from things, and view its effect on others.
Social Awareness	Being interested in important social and political issues affecting you, going on around you or in the world.
Self-Awareness	Thinking about and planning for the future, with regards to personal development and self-identity.
Objective Rational Thinking	Looking at a situation on its own, without letting your personal beliefs get in the way.
Consideration	Being able to take into account the beliefs, feelings or ideas of others.
Environmental Awareness	Demonstrating environmental concerns by recycling, cutting down global warming by saving energy, and so on.
Coaching	Mentoring/Helping others to achieve a task, motivating and providing information and support.
Empathy	Acting with a lot of understanding for others' feelings, or for the feel of a situation.
Integrity	Acting consistently, according to your values, beliefs and principles.
Community involvement	Working that supports/benefits others within the broader community.
Literacy	Being able to present and understand written information coherently.
Presentational skills	Being able to communicate or display work you have produced in an effective way.
Observation	Being able to see and understand how different things link together, and interpret what's going on around you.
Logical Thinking	Being able to bring together ideas or information from different sources and use reasoning effectively to come to a conclusion.
Leadership	Demonstrating the ability to guide or direct an individual or group of people.

Appendix 1: List of Essential Skills Descriptions/Prompts

Unit title: Developing Essential Skills (SCQF level 5)

Skill to be developed	Description/Prompt
Planning Implementation	Being able to make appropriate choices regarding the progress of a task or plan.
Evaluation	Being able to judge or assess strength and weaknesses.
Perseverance	Being willing to keep on with something, withstanding discouragement or difficulties.
Independent Expression	Being able to come up with your own ideas or ways of doing things.
Flexibility	Being open to trying different ways of finding answers to a problem, or being willing to change plans to go along with other people.