

WORKPLACE CORE SKILLS ASSESSMENT SUPPORT PACK



COMMUNICATION SCQF Level 4

Part 1: Information for assessors

Part 2: Exemplar assessment tasks

Part 3: Exemplar recording documentation

Part 1: Information for assessors

What is involved?

The Unit is designed for the workplace and the content should involve tasks and skills that are suited to the requirements of the candidate's working environment.

The focus of the Unit is on transferable communication skills:

- ◆ reading, summarising, and evaluating
- ◆ writing
- ◆ speaking and listening

These skills should be useful to candidates in their current and future jobs, as well as in their social and personal lives.

The Unit is designed for those who have some skill and experience in communicating within the workplace. The work undertaken in the assessments should be routine, eg at assistant worker level. The Unit might be suitable for candidates who are currently working towards an SVQ/NVQ at level 2 or level 3.

Communication tasks can be combined with the other Core Skills Units: Numeracy, Working with Others, Problem Solving, and Information and Communication Technology. If you adopt this approach, records must be kept for each Core Skills Unit.

Guidance on the Unit

Candidates at SCQF level 4 are required to communicate with others using straightforward language in familiar situations. They may need some guidance from you, or from a supervisor or other workplace mentor.

The 'What do I need to do' section of the Unit lists the knowledge, understanding, and competence that candidates must have and what they need to do to prove this. You may want to discuss these with the candidates. The following notes give detailed pointers on the things candidates need to know and be able to do.

What candidates need to do

Reading and understanding

In the workplace, a written communication is often called a 'document' and might be a report, leaflet, letter, notice, or memo on a notice board, or an e-mail.

Working out the purpose of a document

Candidates must read the document and recognise its purpose. In deciding on the purpose, candidates will need to identify who it is written for and why, eg:

- ◆ giving instructions
- ◆ presenting information
- ◆ explaining a point of view

Picking out important points from the document

Candidates must identify:

- ◆ the main points that the writer is making
- ◆ points that back up the main idea
- ◆ action or information that the writer is looking for in response to the communication

Evaluating the document and deciding whether it has achieved the writer's aim

Candidates must be able to evaluate a document, eg by identifying whether:

- ◆ it is clear and easy to read
- ◆ it contains all the information the reader needed
- ◆ both sides of an issue are fairly represented

When evaluating the piece of writing, the candidates must consider the writer's aim. For example, if the purpose was to give instructions, these should have been set out clearly, in a logical order, and in language that could be understood by the intended reader. If the purpose was to give information, was this complete, either in the main body of the text or in supplementary material? In a discussion paper, were both sides of the argument fairly represented or was a bias detected?

Writing

Producing a written communication may be a familiar part of some candidates' working routine. For others, appropriate writing tasks may not occur naturally in the workplace and you may have to design a suitable task that should relate to the everyday working experience of the candidates.

Writing for the reader

The intended readership and the reason for writing will influence the content, format, and layout of the document. Candidates need to decide whom they are writing for, eg clients, colleagues, management, or the public. They must also identify the reason for writing, eg:

- ◆ giving instructions
- ◆ presenting information
- ◆ explaining a point of view
- ◆ to advise or persuade

Candidates must be clear about the main messages and make sure that the way they write is appropriate for the readers. They should demonstrate some awareness of the reading ability of the intended readership.

Choosing a suitable format

Different formats are appropriate for different situations. The content and readership of the document will influence the choice of format, eg:

- ◆ a short formal report on a piece of work completed
- ◆ an e-mail to a colleague giving an update on the latest plans for the redesign of a new office

The choice of subject will also influence whether the communication is completed in handwriting or produced electronically. In today's workplaces, most written communications are produced electronically.

Choosing layout, order, words, and graphics

Thinking about the potential readers, the content, and the format will help candidates to select an appropriate structure and layout. In a workplace context, there may well be a prescribed way of writing reports, letters, and e-mails, in which case this should be adhered to, although sometimes the writer may be allowed to influence the appearance of the finished piece. In most documents candidates must:

- ◆ write in a logical order
- ◆ use paragraphs and headings if appropriate
- ◆ express the main idea first, or give it prominent placing, with supplementary information following
- ◆ use vocabulary familiar to the reader
- ◆ include other items, eg maps, diagrams, pie charts, and photographs, in support of the text if appropriate; these may be selected from a bank of images or created by the candidates

Selecting and including relevant information and/or ideas

Candidates must demonstrate the ability to select information or ideas that are relevant to the main messages of the written communication and avoid including any material that may be interesting but has little bearing on their aim in writing the piece. Their communication should convey several sets of information and/or a clearly stated opinion.

Using vocabulary, sentence structure, and punctuation

At this level, vocabulary, sentence structure, and punctuation conventions should be generally correct, eg:

- ◆ vocabulary should be straightforward but may include some technical or specialist terms familiar to most readers
- ◆ sentences should be constructed correctly and the correct tense used for verbs
- ◆ the main punctuation conventions should be followed, eg capital letters, full stops, commas, question marks, dashes, and brackets

There may be a few errors but these should not prevent the reader from grasping the meaning at first reading.

Spelling straightforward words correctly

It is important that words are spelled correctly so that the meaning is clear to the reader and the document looks professional. Candidates should check any words they are not sure of, using a dictionary or spellchecker or thesaurus.

Speaking and listening

The working environment of the candidates should offer naturally occurring opportunities for discussions. Alternatively, candidates may wish to give a short talk or demonstration about a particular project, product, or service, fielding questions from the listeners.

Expressing ideas clearly

Candidates must know how to prepare for important conversations or discussions, making sure they know what they want to say and making sure they include sufficient information.

Ordering and linking information

Candidates must be able to present spoken information logically:

- ◆ by constructing a speech or presentation with a recognisable structure, ie beginning, middle, and conclusion
- ◆ by indicating the importance of topics from the order in which information is presented: usually most important idea first, often repeated at the end for emphasis (this is particularly important when giving instructions)

Speaking to help listeners understand

Candidates must be able to use some of the most common spoken conventions to aid understanding, eg:

- ◆ speaking slowly, clearly, and loudly enough
- ◆ varying speed and tone for emphasis
- ◆ pausing to allow for a response from the listener

Choose suitable vocabulary

Vocabulary must be:

- ◆ appropriate to the topic
- ◆ generally familiar to listeners

If technical words or abbreviations are used that may not be familiar to the listeners, eg in a workplace briefing, these must be explained.

Using body language

Body language is a valuable clue to the mood and intention of the speaker. It is the unspoken supplement to the spoken words, and the speaker should be aware of and make use of this. Candidates should be encouraged to try to look as relaxed as possible (even if they are nervous) and smile (if it is appropriate to do so). The main indicators are:

- ◆ posture
- ◆ eye contact
- ◆ facial expression
- ◆ gesture, eg opening the hands in welcome, nodding, or shaking the head

Listening carefully to others and responding to questions

It is important that candidates allow listeners/other speakers the opportunity to ask questions or to offer points of view. It is often appropriate to pause at intervals while speaking to allow time for explanation or repetition. However, if this does not happen the speaker must specifically ask for questions or opinions. The speaker must be prepared to provide clarification on:

- ◆ vocabulary
- ◆ specific topics
- ◆ the general sense of what has been said, rephrasing if necessary to aid understanding

Picking out the main points when listening

Candidates must identify the main points of the spoken communication not only by listening to the general sense of what is being said, but also by understanding some of the basic spoken conventions, eg:

- ◆ usually the most important idea is presented first and sometimes repeated at the end for emphasis
- ◆ speakers will often stress key words and phrases by speaking more loudly or slowly at those points

Listening carefully and asking questions

It is important for candidates to understand that listening is not a passive activity and that asking pertinent questions at suitable times during or after the spoken communication is a necessary part of oral communication. They must:

- ◆ ask for clarification on any words or technical terms they have not understood
- ◆ be prepared to ask for additional information if they need it
- ◆ enter into discussion

Interpreting the way other speakers use voice and body language

Candidates must be able to interpret the ways that other speakers get their messages across. This may be from, eg:

- ◆ body language
- ◆ tone of voice

How do candidates show they have achieved the Unit?

The Unit requires the candidates to provide evidence for each of the three tasks.

Task 1: Reading and understanding

Candidates have to read, understand, and evaluate a straightforward document related to their work. They must then show their understanding of the document by written, physical, or oral response.

Task 2: Writing

Candidates have to produce a document or a series of related documents totalling at least 300 words which conveys several pieces of information, opinions, or ideas related to their work.

Task 3: Speaking and listening

Candidates must either discuss a work-related topic with one or more people (lasting a minimum of three minutes) or make a short presentation on a work-related topic to one or more people (lasting a minimum of two minutes with additional time for questions).

Candidates must prove that they can do the whole of each individual task at one time. They must not gather evidence from different situations for different parts of the task.

The three communication tasks can often be part of a single strand of work, eg the candidate may have to read a straightforward document, write a short report on the topic, and discuss it with colleagues.

Assessment requirements

Reading and understanding

You should choose straightforward reading material on a non-fiction topic that conveys several sets of information and/or a distinct point of view. The topic should be mainly familiar to the candidate from their workplace experiences. The reading material may include images as well as words. Vocabulary should be familiar to the candidates and may include some accessible specialist or technical terms. Sentences will usually be simple in structure and there will be a straightforward relationship between paragraphs or other structural divisions. The reading material should express its content in a direct, uncomplicated way and key points should be easily identifiable. The layout and use of graphics and language should match the reading material's purpose and the intended reader.

Writing

You should use a task for assessment that is familiar for the candidates in their workplace. Documents may include images such as maps, sketches, diagrams, or photographs in support of the written text. The candidates will use straightforward vocabulary and sentence structure, including, where appropriate, common specialist or technical terms. A few errors may be present but these should not prevent the reader from grasping the meaning on first reading.

Candidates must produce a document (or a series of related documents) totalling at least 300 words that conveys several pieces of information, opinions, or ideas.

Speaking and listening

The oral communication must be one spoken interaction between the candidate and one or more people. The topic should be one that is straightforward and familiar to the candidate.

Gathering evidence

It may be appropriate for you to gather written evidence produced by the candidate while carrying out the practical tasks. However, written evidence is not essential for the reading and speaking/listening elements of this Unit and is inappropriate if it disadvantages the candidate.

You may wish instead to observe the candidate carrying out a task and use oral questioning. This requires you to create and complete a record of questions asked and candidate responses.

From the candidate's point of view, it is useful to have the means of keeping all the work of this Unit together. You can help here by creating and providing a workbook that includes all the evidence-gathering items. An alternative would be to provide worksheets that can be made into a portfolio or e-portfolio.

If you have chosen to integrate the communication work with other Units being undertaken by the candidate, it may be possible to assess the communication as part of a larger single activity. In this case you must keep separate records for this Unit.

You should try to identify naturally occurring opportunities for assessment where possible. Some of the exemplars in this pack could be used or contextualised for this purpose.

The assessment process is likely to involve one or more of the following:

- ◆ observation
- ◆ recording
- ◆ oral questioning

When assessing by observation you must keep a detailed checklist. Similarly, if you use oral questioning you must keep a record of both the questions and the candidate responses. All evidence, whether produced by the candidate or a record made by yourself, must be retained, signed, and dated by you.

Planning

You should work out where opportunities for meeting the Unit standards are likely to arise. Where possible, these should be built into the assessment process. You should explain and discuss this assessment process with the candidates so that they are clear about what is expected of them.

Part 2: Exemplar assessment tasks

You can use the exemplar assessments given in this section in several ways:

- ◆ to illustrate to candidates the type of materials that could be used to generate evidence
- ◆ to help identify the type and amount of evidence that candidates should have gathered in their portfolio
- ◆ to help identify the level of complexity in evidence required for the Core Skill at this level
- ◆ to help you to identify/create an assessment task related to the candidate's own work environment
- ◆ as an off-the-shelf assessment, although every effort should be made to source/provide candidates with assessment materials that relate to their specific area of work

The exemplars are in the form of a set of instructions. Candidates should refer back to the relevant tasks in the Unit to help them plan what they need to cover.

Exemplar assessments

Task 1: Reading and understanding

Each member of staff has received a copy of this letter. Read it carefully then answer the questions in Task 1 of the Unit.

Dear Colleague

Flexible working: new arrangements from 1st May

The senior management team is pleased to announce new flexible working arrangements. We hope this will help staff to cope with childcare or other family commitments.

Some colleagues are finding it very difficult to cope with the fixed working hours of 9.00am to 5pm on five days a week (4.00 on Friday).

After consultation with the staff representative committee, we have decided to accept their recommendations:

From 1st of May, all staff will be able to work a flexible five-day week of 34 hours

The building will be open from 7.30am until 6.30pm, so staff can begin or end their working day earlier or later than usual, if they wish, depending on their personal circumstances

Holiday entitlement and arrangements remain unchanged.

We would like you to discuss these arrangements with your line manager, who will compile a list of the hours you would each like to work. If you want to make any comments or have any questions, please do this through your line manager, who will communicate with the senior management team.

Yours sincerely

A. Brown

Human Resource Manager

Task 2: Writing

Produce an article for your company's in-house newsletter, informing other staff about the training you are currently receiving. Your article should include:

- ◆ what training you are doing
- ◆ how it is delivered
- ◆ who is delivering it
- ◆ are you enjoying it and why
- ◆ how you think it may help you in future
- ◆ any difficulties you have experienced

Your article should be no less than 300 words, not counting any other information you might want to include such as timetables, training provider details, or pictures. Look at Task 2 of the Unit to help you produce the article.

Task 3: Speaking and listening

Chose one of the following:

Your supervisor has asked your work team to discuss the following topic.

People have fallen into the habit of leaving dirty dishes around the sink area in the staffroom and not bothering to put waste in the bin — generally leaving the room an unhygienic mess. As a group, discuss possible solutions to this problem that will be acceptable to everyone and easy to implement.

Decide what your opinions are and the reasons for them and any points you want to make.

Discuss your opinions with the rest of the work team. Your discussions should last at least three minutes.

or

Give a short talk to tell other staff about a skills competition you entered the previous month. You must speak for at least two minutes and allow extra time for questions. Look at Task 3 of the Unit to help you plan your discussion or talk.

Part 3: Exemplar recording documentation

This section gives some examples of forms that could be used by candidates and/or assessors to gather evidence and record assessment decisions.

You are encouraged to adapt these materials to suit you and your candidate's preferred approach, ie boxes can be made bigger, format can be changed to a non-table format, font size etc.

Assessment plan

You should work out where naturally occurring opportunities for meeting the standards are likely to arise and, where possible, build them into the assessment process.

You should explain and discuss the assessment process with candidates so they are clear about what is expected of them.

Assessment checklists

Candidates could use the assessment checklists as a means of cross-referencing evidence in their portfolio to the Unit.

Assessors could use the assessment checklists to record assessment decisions and any relevant comments.

Summary checklist

The summary checklist could be used to record the assessment decisions from the assessment checklists on a single form.

Assessment plan

Communication (SCQF level 4)

Candidate: _____

Task to be assessed: _____

Proposed date of assessment: _____

Proposed method of assessment	Tick	Notes
Assignment or project		
Observed performance		
Witness testimony		
Written questions		
Oral questioning		
Product evaluation, eg written document		
Previous evidence		
Other evidence		

Details agreed and signed by:

Assessor _____

Candidate _____

Line manager (if required) _____

Date _____

Assessment checklist

Communication (SCQF level 4)

Task 1: Reading and understanding

Candidate name: _____

Date: _____

Task 1: Read and understand a straightforward work-related document.			
	Evidence	Assessor initials and date	Comments
Worked out the purpose of the document			
Picked out important ideas and key points in the document			
Evaluated the document and provided evidence as to how well it meets its purpose			

Assessment checklist

Communication (SCQF level 4)

Task 2: Writing

Candidate name: _____

Date: _____

Task 2: Produce a document or related documents totalling 300 words or more that conveys several pieces of information, opinions or ideas.			
	Evidence	Assessor initials and date	Comments
Identified who will read the document and the reason for producing it			
Used a format that was appropriate to the readers and subject matter			
Used layout, order, words and appropriate graphics that make the piece of writing clear			
Selected and included relevant information and ideas			
Presented the information and ideas with some supporting detail in a logical order			
Used straightforward vocabulary, sentence structure, and punctuation that make the piece of writing clear on first reading			
Spelt straightforward words correctly			

Assessment checklist

Communication (SCQF level 4)

Task 3: Speaking and listening

Candidate name: _____

Date: _____

Task 3: Take part in a straightforward discussion on a work-related topic (lasting a minimum of three minutes) or give a short presentation on a work-related topic to one or more people (lasting a minimum of two minutes with additional time for questions).

Speaking	Evidence	Assessor initials and date	Comments
Expressed several pieces of information, opinions, or ideas clearly when speaking			
Ordered and linked information, opinions, and ideas in a logical way			
Spoke in a way that listeners understood			
Used words that fitted the topic and listeners understood			
Used body language that improved communication			
Listened carefully to any questions and responded accordingly			
Listening	Evidence	Assessor initials and date	Comments
Picked out the main points the speaker was making			
Interpreted the way the speaker used their voice and body language to help get their message across			
Listened carefully and asked questions to clarify anything			

Summary checklist

Communication (SCQF level 4)

Candidate name: _____

Candidate number: _____

Centre: _____

Task	Date achieved
1 Reading and understanding	
2 Writing	
3 Speaking and listening	
Assessor's signature: _____	Date: _____

ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

Credit value

6 SCQF credit points at SCQF level 4



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