

WORKPLACE CORE SKILLS ASSESSMENT SUPPORT PACK



COMMUNICATION SCQF Level 6

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 significant skill and experience in communicating within the workplace. The work undertaken in the assessments may have some complex aspects and will require knowledge or experience of formal workplace communication, eg at managerial level. The Unit might be suitable for candidates who are currently working towards an SVQ/NVQ at level 4.

Communication tasks can be combined with 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 6 are expected to be able to communicate with others through extended documents and discussions. They will deal with language that is sometimes complex and conveys different strands of information or ideas, not all of which will be familiar from the everyday working context. They should require little support in completing their tasks.

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

Reading skills can be developed and assessed by using or adapting material related to the working context of the candidate. Available documents might include in-depth reports, detailed articles, advertising materials, and workplace policies and procedures. It is probable that candidates working at this level would be working with complex written documents on a regular basis.

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:

- ◆ persuade and inform
- ◆ instruct and advise

Identify and summarise all the important ideas, key points, and supporting detail

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

This may involve pulling together material from different parts of the document or interpreting certain lines of argument.

Evaluating if the document is effective in meeting its purpose and readers' needs by commenting on content, style, and format

Candidates must evaluate a document, eg by identifying whether:

- ◆ it is clear and easy to read, with appropriate format and layout
- ◆ it contains all the relevant information the reader needed
- ◆ both sides of an issue are fairly represented and unbiased
- ◆ it is well structured
- ◆ it contains appropriate vocabulary, including technical/specialised words if necessary
- ◆ spelling, punctuation, and grammar are consistently accurate
- ◆ the writing style is appropriate for the content and readership
- ◆ any graphics used enhance the meaning

At this level the candidate must be able to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the document and to suggest ways it might be improved.

Writing

At this level candidates will normally produce written communications as part of their working routine. However, if suitable writing tasks do not occur naturally in the workplace you may have to set a special assessment. Written tasks should relate directly to the working experience of the candidates.

Writing for the reader

Candidates must decide who they are writing for and why, eg to inform, instruct, advise, or persuade. They should be clear about the main messages and make sure that the way they write is appropriate for the readers, both in content and in style, eg a report for the managing director will normally be more formal than an article for the staff magazine. They should demonstrate some awareness of the reading ability of the intended readership.

Candidates must be able to state clearly and unambiguously their reason for producing the written piece, eg:

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

They should identify if a document has more than one purpose, eg to explain and persuade, or to inform and advise.

Choosing an appropriate format

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

- ◆ a project proposal
- ◆ an article for a trade magazine

Candidates must choose an appropriate format. 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 effective layout, structure, vocabulary, and graphics

Thinking about the potential readers, the content, and the format will help candidates 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. 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

Varying sentence structure, paragraphing, and vocabulary

Candidates must be able to vary the structure of sentences, eg simple or complex, and to use sections, sub-sections, paragraph and/or bullet points according to the purpose of the document and the intended readers. Every workplace has its own specialist or technical vocabulary, and candidates will need to know the meanings of those relating to their own work and to other departments in their organisation, and be able to use them in their piece of writing.

Gathering, selecting, and including relevant information or ideas

Candidates must demonstrate the ability to:

- ◆ select information or ideas that are relevant to the main messages
- ◆ avoid including any material that may be interesting but has little bearing on their aim in writing the piece

The communication should convey several sets of information and/or a clearly stated opinion. Candidates may find it useful to prepare for this writing task by asking colleagues for the information they need, using existing internal documents as background and by consulting textbooks, journals, the library, and the internet for source material.

Presenting information/ideas with supporting detail in a logical order

Candidates must be able to write in a clear, logical order, ie linking introduction, main body, and conclusion, and using paragraphs and headings as appropriate to the format of the document. The type of document will dictate the ordering of items, eg:

- ◆ in a report, although the topic will be identified first, the very important results, conclusions, and recommendation will appear at the end, logically following all the evidence
- ◆ in documents providing information or instructions it would be usual, within each section or paragraph, to present the main information first, followed by supplementary material
- ◆ typically, detailed additional material will be contained in annexes or appendices to the main document

Emphasising the main points

Candidates must be able to use common conventions to emphasise the main points:

- ◆ prominence can be given to significant words or phrases by their order within the document or their placement in relation to other words
- ◆ repetition
- ◆ use of large or bold type, bullets, underlining

Using consistently accurate spelling and punctuation

It is important in the workplace that words are spelled correctly so that the meaning is clear at the first reading and so that the document looks professional. Candidates should check any words they are not sure of, which at this level may include some technical and specialist words, abbreviations, and terms, using a dictionary or spellchecker. They should be encouraged to use dictionaries, as sometimes even a computer spellchecker can make mistakes with words that sound the same but have different meanings, eg there, their, and they're.

The main punctuation conventions should be followed, eg use of capital letters, full stops, commas, question marks, dashes, brackets, colons and semi-colons, italics, and capitals.

Selecting alternative words for variety and effect

Candidates must be able to vary the vocabulary of their piece of writing by using alternative words, for both variety and effect. This may be achieved by using a dictionary or thesaurus.

Speaking and listening

Naturally occurring discussions on any aspect of work provide ideal opportunities for assessment: the candidate should make a major contribution. Alternatively, candidates may wish to give a presentation or demonstration about a particular project, product, or service, fielding questions from the listeners.

Judging the degree of formality needed

The candidate should be aware of, and respond to, the nature of the audience or discussion group and make appropriate choices regarding the formality of the language used. An open discussion of staff welfare issues would require a more informal register than when making a presentation to management on the same topic.

Expressing ideas clearly, choosing appropriate language

Candidates should know how to prepare for important conversations or discussions, making sure they know what they want to say. They must choose vocabulary that is:

- ◆ appropriate to the topic
- ◆ generally familiar to listeners: if technical words or abbreviations are used that are unfamiliar to the listener, eg in a workplace briefing, these should be explained

Presenting and linking information/ideas in a logical order

Candidates must be able to present spoken information logically by constructing a speech or presentation with a recognisable structure, ie beginning, middle, and conclusion. Sometimes a summary can be an effective way of drawing the discussion or presentation to a close.

Vary tone, pace, and volume to emphasise main points and help keep listeners interested

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

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 must 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 and responding to questions from others

It is important that candidates allow listeners/other speakers the opportunity to ask questions or to offer points of view. It is appropriate to pause at intervals while speaking to allow time for explanation or repetition. However, if this does not happen, then 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, repeating information or rephrasing if necessary to aid understanding

It can be helpful to summarise the speaker's own points and to synthesise the views of others.

Adapting speaking to take account of sensitive issues or audiences

Candidates must take account of sensitive issues or audiences, for example avoiding jargon words or providing examples if addressing a non-specialist audience or clarifying vocabulary for listeners whose first language is not English.

Picking out the main points when listening to others

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

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

Listening carefully and asking questions

It is important for candidates to make a significant contribution to any discussion by interacting with the other speakers and asking pertinent questions at suitable times during or after the spoken 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

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 complex document related to their work. The document must contain either a set of facts and an analysis of them, or a sustained argument. It will be a substantial and detailed text with complex sentences, specialist words, and concepts that may be unfamiliar to them. It is likely to have more than one purpose. They must then show their understanding of the document by written, physical, or oral response.

Task 2: Writing

Candidates have to produce a well-structured document or a series of related documents totalling at least 700 words that conveys several items of complex information, opinions, or ideas related to their work.

Task 3: Speaking and listening

Candidates must either make a substantial contribution to a discussion on a complex topic related to their work (lasting a minimum of five minutes) or give a short presentation on a complex work-related topic to one or more people (lasting a minimum of four 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 complex document, write a report on the topic, and discuss it with colleagues.

Assessment requirements

Reading and understanding

You should choose reading material on a complex, non-fiction topic that conveys several sets of information and/or points of view with supporting detail. The reading material should combine factual content with analysis or present a sustained point of view. It should feature abstract ideas and complexity in tone, point of view, or central argument. The reading material will normally have more than one purpose, eg to inform, report, and evaluate; to discuss and to persuade; to share experience, draw conclusions, make recommendations. The topic should be one that candidates may reasonably be expected to encounter through their workplace experiences, although the actual topic may not be familiar to the candidate. The reading material may include images as well as words. It will use specialist/technical vocabulary and complex grammar. The structure, layout, and use of graphics and language should match the writer's purpose and the intended reader.

Writing

You should use a task for assessment that is relevant to the candidates in their workplace. Documents may include images such as maps, sketches, diagrams, or photographs in support of the written text. These may be created by the candidate or selected from a bank of images. The candidate will use appropriate vocabulary, including specialist or technical terms, and sentence structures. The document will have a clearly defined purpose, audience, and structure. Information will be presented, analysed, and evaluated and/or ideas will be explored in depth and considered from several perspectives, taking account of and refuting challenges. A few errors may be present when candidates are using complex grammar or vocabulary but these should not be significant.

Speaking and listening

The oral communication must be one spoken interaction between the candidate and one or more people. A discussion should have a clear purpose, be on a relevant topic, and allow for identification and exploration of complex issues and the reaching of a consensus. The candidate must make a significant contribution. A presentation must include sustained and significant interaction with the audience. It may be supported by images using IT software or multimedia tools. The topic should be one that, although complex, is relevant to the candidate's workplace experiences.

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

Candidates should be encouraged to refer back to the Unit to help them plan what they need to cover.

Exemplar assessments

All assessment tasks should be directly related to the workplace environment of the candidate. If naturally occurring opportunities for assessment are not available, eg if some documents were restricted by a workplace confidentiality policy, then you should develop tailored assessment tasks based on actual workplace practices.

Task 1: Reading and understanding

The reading task should be a real workplace document. The text used should present and analyse factual information or present a sustained and sophisticated argument. It is probable that the document would contain at least 1000 words and it may be considerably longer, depending on the subject matter.

Appropriate material might include an in-depth training needs analysis; a detailed article on employment law or health and safety; a company strategy paper; or a project report with conclusions and recommendations.

Task 2: Writing

Candidates have to write a well-structured document or a collection of related documents that presents complex information, opinions, or ideas. Candidates working at this level will often be producing pieces of writing in their daily work and may wish to use small, linked pieces as evidence. However, in this case, at least one of the pieces should be of substantial length.

It may be appropriate to link this task to Task 1: Reading. For example, the candidate might evaluate and summarise key information from the complex written document and present this as a written paper for other staff.

Task 3: Speaking and listening

Preparation should play a major part in this task and candidates should keep a record explaining the situation, eg who was present; what the topic was; what was the purpose of the discussion or presentation. The evidence record might include any plan that was developed.

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 6)

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 6)

Task 1: Reading and understanding

Candidate name: _____

Date: _____

Task 1: Read and understand a work-related document.			
	Evidence	Assessor initials and date	Comments
Worked out the purpose of the document			
Identified and summarised all important ideas, key points, and supporting detail in the document			
Linked key information and ideas to supporting detail			
Evaluated the document's effectiveness in meeting its purpose and readers' needs by commenting on content, style, and format			

Assessment checklist

Communication (SCQF level 6)

Task 2: Writing

Candidate name: _____

Date: _____

Task 2: Produce a document or related documents totalling 500 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			
Chose a format and adapted it to suit the readers and the topic			
Used effective layout, structure, vocabulary, and appropriate graphics that make the piece of writing clear			
Varied sentence structure, paragraphing, and vocabulary to suit the purpose and intended readers			
Gathered, selected, presented, and linked information/ideas with supporting detail in a logical order, emphasising the main points to assist with the clarity and impact of the piece of writing			
Used spelling, punctuation, and sentence structure that were consistently accurate			
Selected alternative words for variety and effect			

Assessment checklist

Communication (SCQF level 6)

Task 3: Speaking and listening

Candidate name: _____

Date: _____

Task 3: Make a substantial contribution to a discussion on a complex topic related to your work (lasting a minimum of five minutes) or give a short presentation on a work-related topic to one or more people (lasting a minimum of four minutes with additional time for questions).

Speaking	Evidence	Assessor Initials/date	Comments
Judged appropriate degree of formality			
Expressed ideas clearly when speaking			
Presented information and ideas in a logical order, linking related information and ideas			
Varied tone, pace, and volume to emphasise the main points and help keep listeners interested			
Used body language that improved communication			
Listened carefully to any questions and responded accordingly			
Adapted speaking to take account of sensitive issues/audience			
Listening			
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 6)

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 6



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