



COMMUNICATION
INFORMATION AND
COMMUNICATION
TECHNOLOGY
NUMERACY
WORKING WITH
OTHERS
PROBLEM SOLVING

Core Skills Bulletin

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Introduction

Hopefully all centres that deliver the NQ Core Skills Units are now using new versions of the Units. As explained in previous Bulletins, the old NQ Core Skills Units are no longer valid (since 1 August 2010). Those centres that are using the Workplace Assessed Units have one more year where they can use either the old or new Unit descriptors but you should be aware that only the new Workplace Assessed Units will be valid from 1 August 2011. If you are unsure which Unit descriptors or Unit codes you should be using, please check our website or get in touch with us for clarification.

We would like to thank everyone who was able to attend the events we held in June this year in Dundee and Glasgow for the new NQ Core Skills Units. The events were generally well received and hopefully helped those attending gain a better understanding of the standards required in the new Units.

In the last issue of the Core Skills Bulletin we announced the publication of the version 2 copies of the new NQ Units and ASPs. We also reported that work had commenced on exemplars to support the NQ Core Skills Units in Communication, Numeracy and ICT at levels 3, 4 and 5 and I'm pleased to say that work has now been completed on these materials. As explained in more detail below, these exemplars are now available on the SQA secure site.

In this Bulletin we have taken the opportunity to update you on some of the issues that centres have been most interested in over recent months, judging from the queries we have received by phone and email. The most common topics have related to Core Skills in NCs and NPAs, the Accreditation of Prior Learning and the availability of exemplar material. Hopefully the articles below will help centre staff who are interested in these areas.

New NQ assessment exemplars in Communication, Numeracy and ICT

We have now completed the assessment exemplars in Communication, Numeracy and ICT at SCQF levels 3, 4 and 5. These materials are all available for download on the SQA secure site, under the heading 'Core Skills' on the NQ subjects drop down menu.

The assessment exemplars can be used by centres to give ideas about the approaches that can be taken to gathering evidence, the standard of evidence required and the sort of topics that might be appropriate. The exemplars should be read in conjunction with the Assessment Support Packs (ASPs) that are available on both the main SQA website and on the SQA secure site.

Work on exemplars for the Core Skills Communication, Numeracy and ICT Units at SCQF levels 2 and 6 will commence soon. We have also commissioned the development of packs to give guidance on the assessment of Problem Solving and Working with Others Units.

Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL) and Core Skills

Where you want to enter candidates for one or more Core Skills Units (either the NQ or Workplace assessed versions) it is always worthwhile to begin by investigating what opportunities there may be for the Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL) for each candidate. Centres should have their own internal policy in relation to APL and in some cases toolkits may be available which can help staff identify suitable evidence for APL.

For Core Skills Units there are two main sources of evidence that could be used for APL purposes: the Core Skills Profile; or evidence of tasks completed previously by candidates in the context of social activities, work or learning.

Core Skills Profile

In many cases your candidates will have a Core Skills Profile that shows achievement of a component or components of Core Skills. This will have been achieved through Core Skills being embedded in other qualifications the candidate has already completed, such as Standard Grades, National Courses, or the Core Skills Units themselves. It is therefore essential that you check the candidate's Core Skills Profile at the outset and you can do

this by looking at the candidate's most recent SQC (Scottish Qualifications Certificate) or by looking at the candidate's record on SQA.net.

Where a candidate has achieved both components in a Core Skill (or all three components in the case of Problem Solving), at the same level, they can use this as evidence towards completion of the appropriate Core Skill Unit at that level. In other words, the Core Skills profile can be used for APL purposes. Here is an example:

David needs to complete the Numeracy Core Skill Unit at SCQF level 5 as part of an Engineering National Certificate. David's Core Skills Profile shows that he has attained the SCQF level 5 Numeracy components (*Using Number* and *Using Graphical Information*) through Standard Grades he completed 2 years ago. David's centre can enter him for the Numeracy Core Skill Unit at SCQF level 5 and use his Core Skills Profile as evidence of current attainment covering the Unit requirements at the appropriate level.

It is important to note that evidence used for APL must be current and sufficient to meet the requirements of the Unit the candidate is being entered for. Where the candidate's Core Skills Profile indicates that Core Skills components have been attained several years ago, it will be for the assessor to judge through discussion with the candidate, whether that evidence is still current. Where there is doubt about the currency of evidence, the assessor may want to supplement this with more up to date evidence, for example from other subjects the candidate may be completing or through a question and answer session, and in this way the assessor may be reassured that the candidate's competence is still current.

There may be instances where a candidate's Core Skills Profile shows partial attainment of a given Core Skill at the appropriate level. For example, a candidate could have a Core Skills Profile that was current and showed the *Oral Communication* component at SCQF level 5 and the *Written Communication* component at level 4. If this candidate was entered for the Core Skill Communication Unit at SCQF level 5, then the candidate's Core Skills Profile could be used as evidence of attainment in some but not all of the requirements of the Unit. The assessor would need to identify which of the Unit requirements the candidate has covered through APL.

Evidence of previously completed tasks

Skills and knowledge can be demonstrated through direct evidence of activities or tasks the candidate has completed in the past (such as emails, reports, accounts, etc) or reflective evidence (often in the form of a diary/log or verbal account). These tasks could have been completed as part of qualifications completed previously, or as part of a job role or social activity. Again it will be for the assessor to judge whether such evidence is still current and sufficient.

For further information on APL, which is sometimes also referred to as Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), centres may want to refer to the document '*Facilitating the Recognition of Prior Learning: Toolkit*' which was produced by The SCQF Partnership earlier this year. This document can be downloaded from The SCQF Partnership website: www.scqf.org.uk

Core Skills in NC and NPA frameworks

In the last Core Skills Bulletin (November 2009), we reported that either 'old' or 'new' versions of the Core Skills Units will be allowed to contribute towards National Certificate (NC) or National Progression Awards (NPAs) where either one or other version of the Units is a requirement of the Group Award framework. In other words, if an NPA framework requires achievement of the 'new' Communication Unit at SCQF level 4, we will also accept achievement of the 'old' version of this Unit in its place. In the same way, where a framework states that the 'old' Unit is required, the 'new' Unit can be accepted in its place.

It should also be noted that a hierarchy arrangement exists for Core Skills Units that form part of NC and NPA frameworks. The hierarchy is set up to give recognition to candidates who have achieved a Core Skill Unit at a higher level than any Core Skill Units that may be specified in the framework. For example:

Julie needs to achieve the SCQF level 4 Communication Unit as part of an NPA she is doing at college. However, Julie completed and achieved the SCQF level 5 Communication Unit while still at school. For the purposes of the NPA, Julie's SCQF level 5 Unit will be allowed to contribute to the Group Award and she does not need to be entered for the SCQF level 4 Unit.

Centres should note that where Core Skills Units are included in NC or NPA frameworks, candidates must achieve a Unit in the Core Skill specified. As explained above, it could be an 'old' or 'new' version of the Core Skills Unit at the given level or it could be a higher level version of the Core Skills Unit. However, only a Core Skills Unit will be accepted, the Core Skills Profile on its own cannot be counted towards achievement of an NC or NPA.

Core Skills contacts

Sandy Riddell (Project Manager)

E-mail: sandy.riddell@sqa.org.uk

Tel: 0845 213 5569

Sarah Cameron (Qualifications Officer)

E-mail: sarah.cameron@sqa.org.uk

Tel: 0845 213 5527