



PROBLEM SOLVING
SCQF Level 6
SQA Unit Code
F42L 024

WORKPLACE CORE SKILLS UNIT

What are Core Skills?

Core Skills are skills and abilities that everyone needs in their work. This is true for every job in every workplace.

The Core Skills are:

- ◆ Communication
- ◆ Numeracy
- ◆ Information and Communication Technology
- ◆ Problem Solving
- ◆ Working with Others

Employers look for Core Skills when they are appointing new staff. They also expect their existing staff to have these skills.

Core Skills are important because they help you work effectively in your present job and also prepare you for jobs that you will do in future. Developing your Core Skills helps you deal with today's rapidly changing world and improve your career prospects.

What is this Core Skills Unit about?

This Unit is about solving complex problems in the workplace.

It is important to note that the focus of this Unit is about how you deal with problems and not whether the problem was completely solved.

Your assessor will explain anything in this Unit that you do not understand.

What should I know or be able to do before I start this Unit?

You should either:

- ◆ have achieved the Core Skills Unit in Problem Solving at SCQF level 5 or an equivalent qualification

or

- ◆ be able to show that you have some experience of solving problems in the workplace, for example improving an ordering system; setting up a procedure for deliveries to customers

What do I need to do?

You will need to carry out each of the following three tasks.

Task 1: Investigating

Investigate and analyse a complex problem related to your work. The problem is likely to involve a situation that is unfamiliar to you and the analysis of complex or unfamiliar variables. To do this you will have to:

- ◆ identify the factors contributing to the problem, situation, or issue, for example:
 - ◆ what are the causes of the problem
 - ◆ why has the situation arisen and why does it need to be solved
 - ◆ what do others know about the problem and what are their ideas on how it might be solved?
- ◆ assess the relevance and comparative importance of these factors
- ◆ apply problem-solving techniques such as sub-dividing the problem into its component parts; lateral thinking
- ◆ consider options available to you for solving the problem
- ◆ develop and justify an approach to deal with the problem

Task 2: Planning and solving

Plan, organise, and carry out your suggested approach. The management of the task may involve more than one ongoing strand of activity, and there may be opportunities for you to review and adjust your original strategy. To do this you will have to:

- ◆ work out an action plan using planning techniques to deal with all the key factors contributing to the problem, for example:
 - ◆ identifying the tasks involved
 - ◆ deciding the order in which these should be undertaken
 - ◆ deciding which tasks may be undertaken simultaneously
 - ◆ deciding who should carry out each task
 - ◆ working within workplace limitations, including methods and systems
 - ◆ managing time
 - ◆ managing people
- ◆ decide on and get the resources you will need to carry out your action plan; you may have to search for these. At least two of them should be resources you are not familiar with, for example:
 - ◆ people
 - ◆ equipment
 - ◆ physical resources
 - ◆ procedures for obtaining these resources
- ◆ decide how your activity will be managed
- ◆ carry out your action plan, reviewing and amending it as appropriate

Task 3: Checking and evaluating

Check how well the problem-solving activity worked in practice. To do this you will have to:

- ◆ identify the criteria you will use to decide how effective every aspect of your problem-solving activity has been, for example:
 - ◆ was your original analysis of the situation correct
 - ◆ did your action plan address all these factors
 - ◆ did the action plan keep to the specified timescale and budget
 - ◆ did everyone carry out their allotted tasks
 - ◆ did you use resources effectively
 - ◆ did amendments to the action plan improve its effectiveness?
- ◆ gather evidence relevant to your chosen criteria with which to judge the effectiveness of all aspects of your problem-solving activity, for example:
 - ◆ making comparisons with other systems
 - ◆ market research
 - ◆ product testing
 - ◆ quantitative and qualitative research
- ◆ decide how effective every aspect of your problem-solving activity has been in resolving the situation or issue, justifying your conclusions from the evidence you have gathered
- ◆ recommend ways of solving similar problems in future and justify these from the evidence that you have gathered

How will I show that I have achieved this Unit?

You will need evidence to show that you have achieved all the tasks in this Unit.

Some of the evidence might come from your assessor watching you carrying out some tasks that are part of your problem-solving activity. In addition, your assessor may ask you questions to check your knowledge, understanding, and practical abilities, and make notes or a recording of what was said and/or done.

You may have video evidence or written evidence, such as notes of discussions with colleagues, e-mails, the action plan itself, records of activities that you have undertaken, and your thoughts on how well things went.

You must choose one problem-solving activity to show that you can do all three tasks. You are not allowed to gather evidence from different problem-solving activities.

What might be involved?

This Unit may be achieved in many ways. Examples of tasks you might do are:

- ◆ Your company is losing customers. You are asked to investigate the reasons for this and form some hypotheses as to reasons for the situation, for example your products are out of date, rival companies are undercutting you on price, your company's supply times are too long, the quality of your products is not as high as those from competitors etc. You will devise a strategy for investigating the validity of these hypotheses and based on the evidence you gather you will produce a report with recommendations as to future actions by your company.

- ◆ You have been asked to devise a marketing campaign to promote your company to potential clients in the locality. You will investigate what are the key selling points of your firm's products or services and decide on ways to promote these locally. You will measure the effectiveness of your campaign.

What can I do next?

You could consider doing other Core Skills Units in:

- ◆ Communication
- ◆ Numeracy
- ◆ Information and Communication Technology
- ◆ Working with Others

Your assessor can advise you about this.

Guidance for assessors

Further information about delivery, assessment, and evidence requirements for this Unit can be found in the corresponding Assessment Support Pack. In addition, the *Guide to Assessing Workplace Core Skills* provides further information on assessment.

Disabled learners and/or those with additional support needs

The additional support needs of individual learners should be taken into account when planning learning experiences, selecting assessment instruments, or considering alternative competence standards for Units.

Additional advice and guidance for learners with disabilities and/or additional support needs should initially be discussed with the centre where the learner is registered.

If the centre is unable to offer a satisfactory solution then the learner, usually in conjunction with the centre, should contact the External Verifier of the Awarding Body where the learner is registered for certification.

Information on Awarding Body requirements to become an 'approved' Awarding Body is published in the SQA Accreditation *Awarding Body Criteria (2007)*.

http://www.sqa.org.uk/files_ccc/AccreditationAwardingBodyCriteria.pdf

ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION**Credit Value**

6 SCQF credit points at SCQF level 6



Publication Date: 2010
Source: SQA Accreditation
Version: 2

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