

Core Skills Framework: an introduction

Working with Others

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Introduction

Core Skills enable people to put their knowledge and understanding into action flexibly, adapting them to new situations. Core Skills apply to a wide range of contexts in education and training, in life, and in work. They underpin and promote the development of learning and study skills, and provide a foundation for lifelong learning and personal development.

The importance of Core Skills is now widely recognised in employment and education. Lifelong learning which builds on people's Core Skills is essential if individuals are to meet their personal needs and the needs of society. In the workplace, employees at every level are increasingly expected to take responsibility for the quality of the products and services they produce or provide. Individuals who can analyse and solve problems, communicate well, use information technology, and work with others effectively, are well-equipped to assume the active, flexible and responsible roles which modern workplaces need.

A wide variety of skills and qualities are developed and used in education and training, in work and in life. Some of these are 'core' to personal development and performance.

First, there are skills for **tackling issues and problems**. These skills include being able to:

- ◆ think critically
- ◆ analyse situations and suggest courses of action
- ◆ plan and organise work and carry it through to completion
- ◆ reflect on what has been done and to draw conclusions for the future

Second, there are skills that are vital in enabling individuals to function effectively. **Communication**, both orally and in writing, is essential for clarifying your own thoughts, for relating to others, and for learning and working. The **numerical skills** involved in processing, interpreting and communicating information can help you to understand, predict and solve many types of problem. Skills in **using information technology** are increasingly useful for obtaining and analysing information, for organising your ideas, and for communicating and working with others. And being able to **work with others** means having skills that help you to co-operate with others in learning and working situations to identify and achieve your shared goals.

The Core Skills

Each Core Skill, and its components, can be assessed at each of five levels (Access 2, Access 3, Intermediate 1, Intermediate 2 and Higher — SCQF levels 2 – 6). This is a brief description of each component and the range activities that its assessment will involve at the different levels.

Communication

Communication skills underpin almost all personal, social, learning and working activity. They are essential in clarifying your thoughts, in interacting and conversing effectively with others, in expressing thoughts and in conveying information, feelings and opinions.

Oral Communication

This component involves the ability to produce and respond to oral communication for a range of purposes and audiences. Essentially, it means being able to take part in discussions and make presentations, interacting with your audience as appropriate. Attainment levels range from:

- ◆ conveying basic information and opinions through short, informal communications on familiar topics
- to:
- ◆ presenting and analysing complex information and issues through more sustained discussions or presentations on complex topics

Written Communication

This component involves the ability to produce and respond to written communication for a range of purposes and audiences. Attainment levels range from:

- ◆ dealing with brief communications expressing a few basic ideas or pieces of information about familiar topics
- to:
- ◆ dealing with communications which analyse and explore complex information and issues

Numeracy

To cope with the demands of everyday life, including work and study, people need to be comfortable with numbers and with graphs, symbols, diagrams and calculators. The skills needed for this are essentially those of interpreting, processing and communicating quantifiable and spatial information.

Using Graphical Information

This component involves the ability to use a range of graphical skills to interpret and communicate quantifiable information. Attainment levels range from:

- ◆ working in familiar contexts with simple specified tables and graphs

to:

- ◆ working in more abstract contexts and with more complex graphical information which may require some analysis, and where decisions have to be made on effective ways to communicate the information

Using Number

This component involves the ability to apply a range of numerical and other relevant mathematical and statistical skills. Attainment levels range from:

- ◆ working confidently with basic numbers in everyday contexts

to:

- ◆ working confidently with more complex numerical concepts and techniques in more abstract contexts

Information Technology

Information Technology is concerned with the electronic collection, organisation, analysis, presentation and communication of information. It encompasses all media types and formats as well as all relevant tools. The Core Skill focuses on the ability to use information technology to process information in a variety of ways which will be useful in work and in the home. It is not about developing IT specialists who will act as first-line support for others or install specialist systems.

Using Information Technology

This component involves the ability to use an IT system to support a range of information-processing activities. Attainment levels range from:

- ◆ accessing the basic facilities of a computer system to perform simple processing of familiar data and to select information from a local database

to:

- ◆ making effective, responsible and secure use of a computer system, using software in a context requiring some analysis and design and retrieving information from a range of sources

Problem Solving

The three components of this skill are stages in the process of tackling issues and problems in personal, social, vocational and occupational contexts. They are often used sequentially, and repeatedly, in a single context. Each skill can also be a major focus of activity on its own.

Critical Thinking

This component involves using analysis and reasoning to make decisions and to create or suggest ideas, courses of action and strategies. Attainment levels range from:

- ◆ working in situations which involve a few, easily-identified factors set in familiar contexts

to:

- ◆ working in more complex situations which require a greater degree of analysis before approaches can be devised

Planning and Organising

This component involves the ability to plan a task, taking account of available resources, and to manage the task to completion. Attainment levels range from:

- ◆ creating plans involving a small number of steps and using familiar resources

to:

- ◆ efficient management of a more complex plan, which may include a review of strategy and a degree of research in identifying the resources to be used

Reviewing and Evaluating

This component involves the ability to reflect on and review the process of tackling issues and problems, to evaluate the Outcomes, and to identify where alternative strategies might have been used. Attainment levels range from:

- ◆ identifying some strengths and weaknesses in a strategy

to:

- ◆ identifying and gathering evaluation evidence, evaluating strategies, and making appropriate recommendations

Working with Others

The inclusion of Working with Others as a Core Skill emphasises its importance in co-operative learning and working situations.

Working with Others

This component involves the ability to work with others to plan, agree and take responsibility for tasks, to support co-operative working in appropriate ways, and to review the effectiveness of one's own contribution. Attainment levels range from:

- ◆ taking allocated responsibility for tasks, seeking or providing information from/to others as required and reviewing one's own contribution

to:

- ◆ analysing tasks and negotiating goals, roles and responsibilities, anticipating and responding to needs of others and evaluating the effectiveness of one's own contribution

Core Skills certification

Since 1999, candidates for a range of SQA qualifications have been able to show what they have achieved in Core Skills. Virtually all Standard Grade candidates should now get a Core Skills profile which will be reviewed each time they achieve a new SQA qualification. There is no need for candidates to achieve all Core Skills, or to complete a Group Award. Their profile will report their Core Skills achievements by component — so Core Skills certification is available to those who do not complete a whole Core Skill. With increasing emphasis being placed on Core Skills in education (including higher education), training and employment, it is important that candidates are given the opportunity to be credited for what they can do.

Candidates can achieve Core Skills through:

- ◆ any Unit or Course which has been audited against the Core Skills framework and validated as fully covering one or more Core Skills component
- ◆ named Core Skills Units

In the former case, certification will be automatic. Neither the centre nor the candidate will need to enter for the Core Skills component — the entry on the Core Skills profile will be generated automatically by SQA when the candidate achieves the relevant Unit or Course.

Named Core Skills Units are available for use by schools, colleges, higher education institutions, and training providers, and in the workplace.

All candidates undertaking a Scottish Group Award will have to achieve specified levels of attainment in Core Skills.

Purpose of this document

The remainder of this document provides detailed technical specifications for each Core Skill for use by those designing and auditing Units, Courses, assessment programmes and Group Awards, and by staff of the Scottish Qualifications Authority.

General skill

Work with others in a group to complete a simple, familiar activity under supervision.

Specific skills

- ◆ agree allocation of tasks, taking account of own preferences
- ◆ seek and provide information from/to others as required
- ◆ identify strengths and/or weaknesses of own contribution to group activity

Further information

The group activity should be capable of being broken down into very simple tasks and should be similar to activities already practised by the candidate.

The candidate must:

- ◆ with support, describe his/her own preferences and agree which group members will carry out particular tasks
- ◆ seek and give information
- ◆ evaluate his/her own contribution to the group activity, using some very simple criteria or questions as prompts

The candidate will need support to explain his/her personal preferences regarding tasks to be undertaken and to allocate and carry out these tasks taking account of these preferences. The candidate may need prompting to seek and give information. Co-operative working relationships should be fostered throughout.

Very simple criteria or structured questions should be provided for the candidate to use in identifying the strengths and/or weaknesses he/she showed in the group activity.

General skill

Work with others in a group to complete a simple activity.

Specific skills

- ◆ agree allocation of tasks taking account of own preferences
- ◆ seek and provide information from/to others
- ◆ identify strengths and/or weaknesses of own contribution to group activity

Further information

The group activity should have a clear aim and be capable of being broken down into simple tasks, specified by the candidate.

The candidate must:

- ◆ describe own preferences and agree which group members will carry out particular tasks
- ◆ seek and give information
- ◆ evaluate own contribution to group activity, using some simple criteria

The candidate may need some support to explain his/her own personal preferences and to agree the tasks to be undertaken. The candidate will then adhere to his/her allocated responsibilities. Co-operative working relationships should be fostered throughout.

Simple criteria or structured questions should be provided for the candidate to use in identifying the strengths and/or weaknesses he/she showed in the group activity.

General skill

Work with others in a group to complete a straightforward activity.

Specific skills

- ◆ identify the main tasks which make up the activity
- ◆ agree allocation of responsibilities taking account of group members' strengths and preferences
- ◆ seek and provide information and support from/to others as required
- ◆ identify strengths and/or weaknesses of own contribution to group activity, and justify this by referring to supporting evidence

Further information

The overall goal for the group activity should be specified for candidates. The group activity should be capable of being broken down into separate tasks which should be obvious but which must be identified by the candidates themselves.

The candidate must:

- ◆ work with others to establish the individual tasks in the activity
- ◆ identify group strengths and preferences and agree responsibilities
- ◆ seek and offer support to others, eg by encouraging, sharing resources, demonstrating, or explaining
- ◆ identify and evaluate own contribution to group activity

Candidates may need prompting to identify the group's collective strengths and weaknesses as well as their own individual strengths/weaknesses, and account should be taken of this when allocating responsibilities. Candidates will then adhere to their allocated responsibilities. Co-operative working relationships should be fostered throughout.

Candidates will decide on criteria and evidence for identifying their own strengths and weaknesses and evaluate their contribution to the group task.

General skill

Work with others in a group to analyse, plan and complete an activity.

Specific skills

- ◆ analyse the activity and identify the component tasks and roles which make up the activity
- ◆ agree allocation of responsibilities taking account of own strengths and weaknesses and those of others
- ◆ support co-operative working
- ◆ evaluate and draw a conclusion about own contribution to group activity, and justify this by referring to supporting evidence

Further information

The overall goal for the group activity should be clear. The activity should be capable of being broken into separate tasks which should not be obvious and which must be identified by the group.

The candidate must:

- ◆ with other group members, analyse the requirements of the activity
- ◆ identify own and group strengths, limitations and preferences and agree allocation of responsibilities, taking account of these
- ◆ with other group members, decide on procedures for carrying out the activity
- ◆ encourage co-operative working by anticipating the needs of others, keeping others informed of progress and contributing to group decisions
- ◆ evaluate own contribution to group activity, developing evaluation criteria and producing evidence

Candidates will identify their own individual and the group's collective strengths, weaknesses and preferences in relation to the activity, negotiate responsibilities taking account of this and adhere to their allocated responsibilities.

Candidates will provide information to and seek information from others as required, anticipating the needs of others and providing support accordingly. Co-operative working relationships should be fostered throughout.

Candidates will decide on criteria for identifying their own strengths and weaknesses and should make an assessment of how they might have acted to improve overall group performance.

General skill

Work with others in a group to analyse, plan and complete a complex activity.

Specific skills

- ◆ analyse the activity by defining the goal and identifying the component tasks and roles which make up the activity, taking account of the size and expertise of the group
- ◆ negotiate roles and responsibilities with others, taking account of own strengths and weaknesses and those of colleagues
- ◆ negotiate working methods and rules for managing the group's work
- ◆ support co-operative working
- ◆ evaluate and draw conclusions about own contribution to group activity, and justify this by referring to supporting evidence

Further information

The candidate must:

- ◆ agree the nature and scope of the activity
- ◆ with other group members, analyse the requirements of the activity
- ◆ taking account of group strengths, limitations and preferences, negotiate roles and responsibilities
- ◆ negotiate working methods and rules for managing the group's work which are acceptable to colleagues and consistent with available resources
- ◆ support others, eg by offering encouragement, sharing resources, modifying behaviour to meet the needs of different situations, or dealing with disagreement sensitively
- ◆ evaluate and draw conclusions about own contribution to group activity, developing evaluation criteria and producing evidence

The general, overall goal for the group activity should be clear, but the goal will need to be defined exactly. The activity should be capable of being broken down into separate but not obvious tasks.

Candidates will identify their own individual and the group's collective strengths and weaknesses in relation to the task, negotiate and adhere to roles and responsibilities allocated.

Candidates will provide information to and seek information from others as required, will anticipate the needs of others and provide support accordingly. Co-operative working relationships should be fostered throughout.

Candidates will decide on criteria for identifying their own strengths and weaknesses, and gather and present information on their own contribution to the task; and from this suggest a strategy for enhancing their future contribution to effective group working.