



Questions & Answers

The following questions are based on questions raised by delegates during the Webinar for Workplace Assessed Core Skills units in numeracy and ICT, held on 2 May 2019.

As some of the questions overlap, we have grouped the questions under themes and tried to provide answers that cover all points raised.

Core Skills – work based units: Numeracy and ICT

Theme – embedded Core Skills in Modern Apprenticeships

Question: If a candidate has previously achieved a MA (Modern Apprenticeship) where core skills are embedded, for example, Working with Others (WWO) in an admin modern apprenticeship, will these be updated in the candidate's core skill profile?

Answer: Although some modern apprenticeship frameworks list one or more of the core skills as 'embedded', this does not mean they are automatically certificated by SQA. It is important to remember that the modern apprenticeship frameworks are designed by Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) and not by SQA. Where an SSC states that one or more of the core skills are 'embedded', this simply means that candidates do not have to show separate certification for those particular core skill(s) to achieve the modern apprenticeship.

The SSCs carry out a simple mapping exercise to decide whether core skills are 'embedded' within the SVQ candidates must complete as part of their modern apprenticeship. However, the mapping carried out by SSCs is not recognised by SQA.

Theme – Prior Verification

Question 1: Would a contextualised pack need to be prior verified if it contains the same formulas, etc?

Question 2: Creating contextualised numeracy tasks - do they need to be approved before use in assessment?

Answer: It is important to stress that for the Workplace Assessed Core Skills units, evidence should be mainly naturally occurring. It is only where there are gaps that cannot be filled by naturally occurring evidence that the use of set assessments should be considered. In order to design set assessments to cover these gaps, centres can use the ASPs to give them ideas of the type of tasks that may be appropriate. Centres may also find it helpful to refer to the exemplar packs for the National Qualification Core Skills units, to provide examples of tasks appropriate for each level.

Centres are not required to seek prior verification from SQA of assessment material used to cover gaps in the naturally occurring evidence for workplace assessed units.

Some centres may find it helpful to discuss the standards and their approaches to gathering evidence with an external verifier. This can be arranged through a development visit to the centre, although it should be pointed out that there is a fee for this service. To find out more about this service and how to request a development visit, please use the following link to the relevant page on the SQA website: <https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/47603.html>

Theme – Lack of naturally occurring evidence

Question: The main problem I find in the retail and hospitality sectors is that the core skills are set at a much higher level than the candidate's job role therefore you cannot find naturally occurring evidence.

Answer: It may be worth asking if the candidate can be involved in workplace tasks that would not normally be associated with their job role, in an effort to generate higher level evidence. If that is not possible, then projects and tasks would have to be designed that provide a good match for the type of tasks they may have to perform at a higher level, to supplement any evidence that is naturally occurring.

If the modern apprenticeship requires candidates to achieve the Workplace Assessed Core Skills units at too high a level for their job roles, then this may be an issue with the modern apprenticeship framework itself. As already stated, SQA is responsible for the Workplace Assessed Core Skills units but not for the design of the MA frameworks.

Theme – Using Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL) / Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) within Core Skills

Question 1: If someone has Application of Maths and Methods in maths through Edexcel GCSE how can this be mapped to Scottish system?

Question 2: Can you provide any clarification about the use of RPL of English candidate's qualifications?

Question 3: Can APL from Wales be linked too?

Question 4: Our recent ICT EV visit pointed out that we as a centre have a responsibility for ensuring that we seek evidence that is keeping up to date with technology and especially when using APL for someone who has achieved an ICT core skill some time ago.

Question 5: In terms of APL/RPL, could qualifications be out of date? For example, a candidate who achieved their core skills 10 years ago. What about consolidation of learning/skills?

Answer: There are a number of overlapping points raised here about APL/RPL within core skills. The simple answer is that qualifications from other awarding bodies can be used for APL/RPL purposes towards the completion of the Workplace Assessed Core Skills units.

Where a candidate has already achieved a qualification in a similar subject at a similar level to the core skills unit you have entered them for, the previous attainment effectively becomes a source of evidence. The assessor would need to check the content and coverage of the qualification the candidate had achieved, against the standards for the core skills unit to see where there may be a match and where gaps may exist.

The length of time between the candidate completing a qualification and that qualification being used for APL/RPL, will also be an important factor. The Workplace Assessed Core Skills units should reflect the candidate's current competence, so the assessor must judge whether the qualification being used as evidence is still current. It may be helpful for the

assessor to use some supplementary questioning to check whether the candidate has retained the skills and whether they can be deemed as current.

For modern apprenticeship candidates that have previously completed core skills and have been certificated by SQA, then it will be for the SSC to decide whether they accept the previously achieved core skill or not. The modern apprenticeship frameworks state that candidates that have already been certificated for a given level of core skills do not have to be certificated again but no certification timescale is mentioned.

For further information on APL, centres should refer to SQA's RPL Policy:

<https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/67029.html>

Theme – Using evidence for more than one core skill

Question 1: Can you collect naturally occurring evidence across more than one core skill?

Question 2: Can a candidate collect evidence for numeracy through ICT, for example using a spreadsheet application.

Answer: It is possible to collect evidence that matches the requirements of more than one core skill. This is something that should be considered when planning and looking for opportunities to collect evidence. The use of spreadsheets to provide evidence for certain requirements of both numeracy and ICT, is a good example of this and spreadsheets are sometimes used to provide evidence relating to the creation of graphs. It should be noted though, that where spreadsheets are used to provide evidence for numeracy, as in the example given, it will be important that the candidate can show that they understand the process that leads to the graph being created and can interpret the graph as required.

Theme – Bespoke software

Question: I have seen mention of 'bespoke software' can you define 'bespoke software'?

Answer: Any software which is specific to a candidate's working environment, it does not have to be standard word processor, spreadsheet, presentation or database.

Theme – Examples

Question: An example of a project would be good to see.

Answer: As mentioned above, we must stress that for the Workplace Assessed Core Skills units, evidence should be mainly naturally occurring. Projects and other set tasks should only be used to cover gaps in naturally occurring evidence.

There has always been a debate about the wisdom of publishing exemplar projects and/or completed tasks in case centres view these as the correct or best approach. What we want to do is encourage assessors to look for naturally occurring evidence wherever possible and to look for opportunities to assess gaps in naturally occurring evidence using approaches that are tailored to the individual candidate, their job role and the specific vocational context.

We will continue to review our position on this to see if we can find agreement on a workable approach to publishing exemplification of workplace assessment.

Theme – access to materials

Question: Can candidates have access to the numeracy and ICT core skill packs before actually sitting the core skill in order to prepare?

Answer: The Assessment Support Packs (ASPs) for the Workplace Assessed Core Skills units are openly available on the SQA accreditation website. Therefore, it is not possible to prevent candidates from getting access to them if they search for them. It should be emphasised though that the ASPs provide examples of the type and level of tasks that may be set and they should not be used as 'off the shelf' assessments.

Once again, we should state here, that evidence for these units should be mainly naturally occurring.

Theme – Updating the ICT core skill standards

Question: Will the ICT descriptors be modified to keep up with the changes in technology?

Answer: There is a lot of discussion around the whole area of core skills and generic/transferrable skills at the moment. It is very likely that agreement will be reached between the various organisations involved over the next year or so that will lead to a new approach in this area. It has therefore been decided that it would not be appropriate to introduce changes at this particular time and therefore the existing core skills arrangements and standards will continue for the time being.

Theme – Evidence from organisations with set IT security systems

Question: If you work in a large organisation whose IT Services division sets up all antivirus and security systems, what can be submitted for Level 6? Is it enough to show the candidate knows how to update definition files and changes passwords regularly?

Answer: Where the candidate is engaging with organisational policy for IT security, they could offer a reflective account of their organisations policy, the relevance to their role and examples of how they do this. Alternatively, witness testimony could be used.

Theme – GDPR and candidate evidence

Question: Will GDPR have an effect on students submitting evidence eg databases, spreadsheets, in terms of assessor's access to personal data such as customer information?

Answer: Where the centre judges that there may be a GDPR issue in storing candidate evidence, then care should be taken to ensure that any personal information contained within the evidence is anonymised. Where evidence has to be anonymised, it should still be possible to show that the evidence meets the requirements of the unit.

Theme – Qualification Verification Summary Reports

Question: The Qualification Verification Summary Reports are a great resource for core skill-specific CPD.

Answer: Agreed. The Qualification Verification Summary Reports can be found in the core skills section of the SQA website: <https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/37873.html>