NextGen: HN unit specification

Digital Skills (SCQF level 7)

Unit code: J868 47

SCQF level: 7 (8 SCQF credit points)

Valid from: August 2026

This unit specification provides detailed information about the unit to ensure consistent and transparent assessment year on year. It is for lecturers and assessors, and contains all the mandatory information you need to deliver and assess the unit.

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Contents

Unit purpose

This non-specialist unit provides learners from any discipline with an accessible introduction to the essential digital competencies they need in vocational and academic contexts. Digital proficiency is a critical skill set for learners, and this unit aims to provide them with foundational knowledge and practical experience in:

- using and managing digital devices
- artificial intelligence (AI) tools
- data and data security
- using digital productivity tools
- automating digital processes

We recommend that learners have basic skills in the use of digital devices and in numeracy before starting the unit.

This unit is generic, and you can integrate it into any qualification framework at SCQF level 7 or 8. During the unit, learners gain practical digital skills and an understanding of the ethical, social, and creative dimensions of digital technologies.

On completion of the unit, learners can apply the knowledge and skills gained to other units in the Higher National Qualification. They may progress to further units in more specialised areas of computing, such as Data Skills at SCQF level 7.

Unit outcomes

Learners who complete this unit can:

1. demonstrate digital literacy
2. demonstrate cyber and data literacy
3. demonstrate AI literacy
4. demonstrate the use of digital tools for productivity, creativity and problem solving in a vocational context

Evidence requirements

Learners must provide product evidence for the unit, in the form of a digital product that they produce for a vocational purpose.

Learners' product evidence must demonstrate that they can:

1. demonstrate competence in using digital devices and tools
2. manage and protect personal and other data
3. manipulate and visualise data
4. apply an AI tool to assist in the solution to a problem
5. automate a process

Learners' evidence must show their creative and productive use of digital technology to solve a relevant vocational problem. Product evidence may take various forms. It could be a digital artefact (such as a digital document relating to learners' vocational interests) along with a narrative explanation of their use of digital technologies, data management and security, data manipulation and visualisation, and AI.

Learners must produce evidence over an extended period in lightly-controlled conditions or generate it in conjunction with other units.

You must authenticate the evidence. The Guide to Assessment provides further advice on methods of authentication.

Learners can present their evidence in an e-portfolio.

The standard of evidence should be consistent with the SCQF level of this unit.

Knowledge and skills

Knowledge	Skills
Learners should understand: • operating systems and file systems • web browsers and search functions • online tools for communication and collaboration • online etiquette • internet safety and data security • cyber threats • data management, backup and recovery • data skills • data visualisation and interpretation • AI and its applications • chatbots and AI-powered assistants • generative AI (text and image) • office productivity (notes, calendars, to-do lists, documents) • problem solving with digital tools • automation tools • ethical considerations when using digital devices and AI	Learners can: • manage information storage on a digital device • use a browser to navigate the internet • search for and download information from the internet • download and install updates on a digital device • collaborate and share information in online meetings • manage data securely • analyse data using an appropriate application (app) • visualise and interpret data • use a method of authentication • create documents and presentations • create and edit visual digital media • use generative AI to produce content • use a digital tool to solve a problem • automate a task

Meta-skills

You must give learners opportunities to develop their meta-skills throughout this unit. We have suggested how to incorporate the most relevant ones into the unit content, but you may find other opportunities.

Throughout the unit, learners develop meta-skills to enhance their employability in their chosen sector.

Your delivery and assessment of the unit contributes to learners' natural development of the meta-skills of self-management, social intelligence and innovation. You should encourage learners to develop a minimum of one area in each of these three categories, but they do not need to cover all suggested subsections. The following suggestions may help shape your delivery and assessment.

Self-management

This includes focusing, integrity, adapting and initiative. The most relevant are:

- focusing:
    - managing time to complete work by required deadlines
- integrity:
    - acting in an ethical and legal manner when using digital devices and tools
    - developing good working relationships with peers
- adapting:
    - acquiring new ideas and knowledge about issues or topics
    - using a range of digital devices and tools to complete assessments
    - reflecting on own performance to improve approach

- initiative:
    - developing own ideas and areas of enquiry
    - making informed decisions when accessing information from the internet

Social intelligence

This includes communicating, feeling, collaborating and leading. The most relevant are:

- communicating:
    - explaining ideas
    - producing understandable conclusions from the use of digital tools
    - sharing ideas and opinions on ethical issues in the use of digital tools, such as AI
- collaborating:
    - working with others on presentations
    - taking account of others in planning and carrying out tasks
    - building relationships with peers

Innovation

This includes curiosity, creativity, sense-making and critical thinking. The most relevant are:

- curiosity:
    - acquiring digital skills independently
    - using digital tools to improve productivity and creativity
- sense-making:
    - recognising phishing communications
    - presenting data visualisations

- critical thinking:
    - selecting digital tools for a specific purpose
    - reviewing and evaluating own work and progress

Learners may develop other meta-skills throughout the unit, depending on the learning and practical activities they are involved in. These include:

- social intelligence:
    - feeling
    - leading
- innovation:
    - creativity

Learning for Sustainability

Throughout this unit, you should encourage learners to develop their skills, knowledge and understanding of sustainability.

This includes:

- a general understanding of social, economic and environmental sustainability
- a general understanding of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)
- a deeper understanding of subject-specific sustainability
- the confidence to apply the skills, knowledge, understanding and values they develop in the next stage of their life

Delivery of unit

You can deliver the unit as part of a qualification. You can combine delivery with other units that provide opportunities for learners to further develop the knowledge and skills in the unit through practice.

You should deliver outcomes in a sequential order. While the exact time allocated to the unit is at your centre's discretion, the notional design length is 40 hours. We suggest the following distribution of time:

Outcome 1 — Demonstrate digital literacy (8 hours)

Outcome 2 — Demonstrate cyber and data literacy (8 hours)

Outcome 3 — Demonstrate AI literacy (8 hours)

Outcome 4 — Demonstrate the use of digital tools in productivity, creativity and problem-solving (16 hours)

Additional guidance

The guidance in this section is not mandatory.

Content and context for this unit

Your approach to the topics below depends on the range of computing devices learners are familiar with. For example, you can use a device's operating system to demonstrate the features of that operating system. You can give learners confidence by choosing applications (apps) that are already present on their chosen devices.

You should always emphasise general principles, rather than explore any one device type or ecosystem in depth.

You could introduce the topics in the following order:

Digital literacy

This is the ability to use devices, software, and apps with confidence and ease. It includes:

- finding, downloading and using information from the internet
- communicating and sharing online
- installing software updates
- managing files and folders

Tools for this topic include browsers, email clients, note-taking and document creation apps, and video conferencing.

Data literacy

This is the ability to access, work with, and communicate data. It includes extracting meaning from data and sharing insights with others.

Tools for this topic include spreadsheets, charting apps, and online data analysis services.

Cyber literacy

This is the ability to follow safe practices against phishing scams and viruses, safeguarding personal and company data and filtering information that comes from online sources.

Tools for this topic include anti-virus software, authenticators, and multi-factor authentication (MFA).

AI literacy

This is the ability to understand how AI works, what it can and cannot do, and how it has an impact on society. It includes the use of AI tools and applications, such as generative AI, to enhance own capabilities.

Tools for this topic include chatbots and virtual assistants.

Problem solving

This is the ability to use digital tools and services to make a process more efficient or replace it with an automated version. It includes processes that require computation or searching and sorting as a means of efficiently collecting information.

Tools for this topic include spreadsheets and survey forms.

Digital productivity and creativity

This is the ability to use digital tools and platforms to generate original and innovative content, such as documents, presentations, stories, poems, essays, songs, or images. It includes making and sharing digital creations.

Tools for this topic include word processing software, presentation software, video editors, image editors, and audio editors.

Automation literacy

This is the ability to automate tasks using a software tool or a scripting language.

Tools for this topic include workflow automation tools.

Approaches to delivery

You should structure the learning and teaching programme to allow time for the development of meta-skills. You should also allow for assessment practice within the hours suggested. Learners can benefit from a varied and active learning approach, where they engage in supported, independent and collaborative learning. You should encourage learners to take a participative and practical approach. Delivery methods you could use include, but are not restricted to:

- demonstration
- individual and group tasks
- presenting findings
- use of a virtual learning environment (VLE)
- digital tools and social media
- film and visual images

Unit delivery is flexible, so you can deliver it in a way that best suits your expertise, learners' needs, and time constraints.

Approaches to assessment

The primary assessment instruments for the unit are practical tasks, in the form of assignments, case studies, projects or reports.

Alternatively, you can present learners with a case study or problem to resolve that requires them to demonstrate the skills set out in the evidence requirements. Ideally, learners would complete assessment tasks individually. If you use a group task, individual learners must show coverage of all evidence requirements.

Equality and inclusion

This unit is designed to be as fair and as accessible as possible with no unnecessary barriers to learning or assessment.

You must consider the needs of individual learners when planning learning experiences, selecting assessment methods or considering alternative evidence.

Guidance on assessment arrangements for disabled learners and those with additional support needs is available on the assessment arrangements web page.

Information for learners

Digital Skills (SCQF level 7)

This information explains:

- what the unit is about
- what you should know or be able to do before you start
- what you need to do during the unit
- opportunities for further learning and employment

Unit information

In the modern, digitally-infused world, technology skills are no longer optional — they are essential. This unit helps you to gain the competencies you need for academic success and beyond, no matter what your subject or career goals are.

You develop your knowledge of the concepts of digital and artificial intelligence (AI) literacy by understanding not just the 'how', but also the 'why' behind modern technologies. You learn to safeguard your digital life through consideration of data, data security and cyber threats. By engaging with tools, problem solving, and automation, you unlock your potential to use technology creatively and productively. You understand how to navigate ethical and social considerations in a digital age, beyond technical know-how.

On completing the unit, you can:

1. demonstrate digital literacy in the use of digital devices
2. demonstrate cyber and data literacy
3. demonstrate AI literacy
4. demonstrate the use of digital tools for productivity, creativity and problem solving in a vocational context

Meta-skills

Throughout this unit, you develop meta-skills that are useful for your chosen sector.

Meta-skills are transferable behaviours and abilities that help you adapt and succeed in life, study and work. There are three categories of meta-skills: self-management, social intelligence and innovation.

Self-management

This includes focusing, integrity, adapting and initiative. The most relevant are:

- focusing:
    - managing time to complete work by required deadlines
- integrity:
    - acting in an ethical and legal manner when using digital devices and tools
    - developing good working relationships with peers
- adapting:
    - acquiring new ideas and knowledge about issues or topics
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    - presenting data visualisations
- critical thinking:
    - selecting digital tools for a specific purpose
    - reviewing and evaluating own work and progress

Learning for Sustainability

Throughout this unit, you develop skills, knowledge and understanding of sustainability.

You learn about social, economic and environmental sustainability principles and how they relate to your chosen sector. You also develop an understanding of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

Administrative information

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Superclass: CC

History of changes

Version	Description of change	Date

Please check our website to ensure you are using the most up-to-date version of this unit.