

Features include:

- Using e-portfolios - Update on re-accredited and new Edexcel NVQs
- Train to Gain - FE College questionnaire - Stay alert! - Win something!

Editor's welcome

Dear colleagues

I hope you have had an opportunity to take a break from your busy schedules and spent some time relaxing during the wonderful weather we experienced for most of the summer!

I had a great six days in France - which included canoeing down the Dordogne - a wet but fun experience. My first attempt at canoeing, but certainly not the last!

On the holiday theme: have any of you achieved something amazing during your break this summer? If so, email me about it and we will have a feature in the next edition about what kinds of things people do to relax or learn on holiday - you may give someone a great idea!

The last quarter saw, amongst other things:

- *accreditation of new NVQ qualifications in languages, health and transport, and re-accreditation of our NVQ in Advice and Guidance*
- *publication of a number of support materials for our NVQs*
- *some further instances of incremental change from the SSCs/SSBs*
- *increased feedback from you, with ideas for future editions of NVQ News.*

More about these follow, so keep reading!

Our marketing team wants to find out more about Business Units in centres which work with their local community and employers, as well as maybe national employers. They want to find out more about how you work and what we can do to support you. See the item in this edition about the marketing team's survey - if you complete and return their online questionnaire you will be placed in a draw and might be one of five people lucky enough to win a memory stick.

I would like to hear from you about what is happening in your centres with your candidates.

- *Share your success stories to inspire others.*
- *Share your NVQ or assessment problems and let's see how your peers can offer ideas for moving forward.*
- *Tell us about the new initiatives relating to NVQs and National Occupational Standards that you want to know more about.*

Looking forward to our winter edition of NVQ News, what do you do with your candidates to celebrate their achievements? Tell about the events and functions you have - let's celebrate success!

This is your NVQ News. We are really pleased with the ideas you have already put forward. Please keep them coming so we can give you what you want and need in future issues.

*Caroline Jolliff
NVQ Development Manager*

Voice it - your comments, your voice

Thank you for all your responses and comments; we look forward to hearing more from you!

'Thanks, I read it from cover to cover!'

*Tom Frost
Wigan & Leigh College*

'Thanks for the business administration update... Also really enjoyed the profile for Sue Richardson. Really enjoy reading these newsletters, keep them coming.'

*Claire Mason
NVQ Coordinator
Fletcher Consultancy*

'Excellent newsletter.'

*Barbara Ponder
NVQ Centre Manager
Disabilities Trust*

'I enjoyed reading the NVQ News. It was both informative and helpful...'

*Rosemarie Barber
EV for NVQs*

FE College questionnaire

Edexcel would like to ask you to invest a few minutes of your time to complete a short questionnaire. We are seeking to gain a better understanding of your college and how it operates.

We continually seek to improve our offer for the further education sector in order to ensure that both colleges and their learners receive the highest level of support and service possible.

Please consult with your colleagues where necessary when completing responses. We hope that you will be able to take advantage of this opportunity to help us better support your business and would like to thank you in anticipation for your involvement.

Click [here](#) to download the questionnaire.

To encourage you to take part in this consultation we are offering an opportunity to take part in a draw - and five people will win a memory stick. All you need to do is fill in the questionnaire and return it to us and you will be entered into our draw. The closing date for responses is 20th October 2006.

Qualifications development

Qualifications accredited since April 2006

Since April 2006 the following qualifications have been accredited.

Edexcel ID	QCA QAN	NVQ title	Lvl	Effective	Expiry	Last cert
Health and Social Care						
Q5000253	10061010	ADVICE AND GUIDANCE SUPPORT (R)	2	01/08/06	30/04/10	30/04/12
Q5000254	10061022	ADVICE AND GUIDANCE (R)	3	01/08/06	30/04/10	30/04/13
Q5000255	10061034	ADVICE AND GUIDANCE (N)	4	01/08/06	30/04/10	30/04/13
Health						
Q5000252	1004985X	HEALTH (MEDICAL ASSISTANCE) (N)	2	01/04/05	30/04/08	30/04/10
Retail						
Q5000281	500/1185/6	EDEXCEL LEVEL 1 NVQ IN RETAIL SKILLS (N)	1	01/09/06	31/08/09	31/08/10
Q5000282	500/1184/4	EDEXCEL LEVEL 2 NVQ IN RETAIL SKILLS (N)	2	01/09/06	31/08/09	31/08/11
Q5002083		EDEXCEL LEVEL 3 NVQ IN RETAIL (SALES PROFESSIONAL) (N)	3	01/09/06	31/08/09	31/08/12

Q5000284	500/1186/8	EDEXCEL LEVEL 3 NVQ IN RETAIL (VISUAL MERCHANDISING) (N)	3	01/09/06	31/08/09	31/08/12
Q5000285		EDEXCEL LEVEL 3 NVQ IN RETAIL (MANAGEMENT) (N)	3	01/09/06	31/08/09	31/08/12
Transport						
Q5000280	50011133	PASSENGER CARRYING VEHICLE DRIVING (BUS AND COACH) (R)	2	01/08/06	31/07/10	31/07/12
Languages (qualifications)						
Q5000259	10062567	ARABIC (N)	1	01/09/06	31/10/08	31/10/09
Q5000260	10062701	ARABIC (N)	2	01/09/06	31/10/08	31/10/10
Q5000261	10062841	ARABIC (N)	3	01/09/06	31/10/08	31/10/11
Q5000262	10062580	CHINESE (N)	1	01/09/06	31/10/08	31/10/09
Q5000263	10062725	CHINESE (N)	2	01/09/06	31/10/08	31/10/10
Q5000264	10062865	CHINESE (N)	3	01/09/06	31/10/08	31/10/11
Q5000265	10062609	FRENCH (N)	1	01/09/06	31/10/08	31/10/09
Q5000266	10062749	FRENCH (N)	2	01/09/06	31/10/08	31/10/10
Q5000267	10062889	FRENCH (N)	3	01/09/06	31/10/08	31/10/11
Q5000268	10062622	GERMAN (N)	1	01/09/06	31/10/08	31/10/09
Q5000269	10062762	GERMAN (N)	2	01/09/06	31/10/08	31/10/10
Q5000270	10062890	GERMAN (N)	3	01/09/06	31/10/08	31/10/11
Q5000271	10062646	ITALIAN (N)	1	01/09/06	31/10/08	31/10/09
Q5000272	10062786	ITALIAN (N)	2	01/09/06	31/10/08	31/10/10
Q5000273	10062919	ITALIAN (N)	3	01/09/06	31/10/08	31/10/11
Q5000274	1006266X	SPANISH (N)	1	01/09/06	31/10/08	31/10/09
Q5000275	10062804	SPANISH (N)	2	01/09/06	31/10/08	31/10/10
Q5000276	10062944	SPANISH (N)	3	01/09/06	31/10/08	31/10/11
Q5000277	10062683	WELSH (N)	1	01/09/06	31/10/08	31/10/09
Q5000278	10062828	WELSH (N)	2	01/09/06	31/10/08	31/10/10
Q5000279	10062968	WELSH (N)	3	01/09/06	31/10/08	31/10/11

Please see the item further on about the our new Edexcel NVQ in Languages.

Finally - a point to remember - the QCA QAN code (see above) is the LSC funding code.

In the NVQ development pipeline

These are support products for the qualifications that have been accredited recently, and include sector guidance for centres and logbooks and guidance for candidates:

- Edexcel Level 2, 3 and 4 NVQs in Customer Service (CD) (R)
- Edexcel Level 2, 3 and 4 NVQs in Advice and Guidance (CD) (R)
- Edexcel Level 2, 3 and 4 NVQs in Playwork (CD) (R/N)
- Edexcel Level 1, 2 and 3 NVQs in Retail Skills - including endorsed titles at Level 3: Sales Professional, Management, Visual Merchandising (W) (P) (CD) (N)
- Edexcel Level 2 NVQ in Passenger Carrying Vehicle Driving (Bus and Coach) (W) (P) (CD) (R)
- Edexcel Level 3 and 4 NVQs in Managing In Road Passenger Transport (CD) (N)
- Edexcel Level 1, 2 and 3 NVQ qualifications in Languages (and individual units) (W) (P) (CD) (R/N)

Key

R - based on revised NOS

N - New NVQ qualification for Edexcel

W - Edexcel [website](#)

P - only logbooks are available as a printed publication

CD - CD ROM containing all materials available

Extensions to NVQs

For information about Edexcel NVQ qualifications that have been extended in the last quarter, please visit our [website](#).

Expiring NVQ qualifications

Please visit the [website](#) for a list of NVQs expiring between now and the end of March 2007.

Qualifications updates

Update on re-accredited and new Edexcel NVQs

A CD ROM is being produced for all of the qualification suites mentioned in this article. Each CD ROM will contain all the guidance for centres and candidates, as well as candidate logbooks for the specific qualification(s). Logbooks are also available in hard copy. Unless stated otherwise, the key materials are currently on our website.

Edexcel Levels 1, 2 and 3 NVQ Language qualifications and units (new)

Edexcel is pleased to announce that our *new* four-unit NVQ qualifications and associated language units have been accredited by QCA.

These units and qualifications link directly to the latest CILT National Language Standards.

Centres were able to offer them from 1 September 2006.

Which languages are available?

The Edexcel Levels 1, 2 and 3 NVQ Language qualifications and units are available in the following languages:

- Arabic
- Chinese
- French
- German
- Italian
- Spanish
- Welsh (as a second language).

New Edexcel NVQ language units

Many of you will already be aware of the key features that Edexcel NVQ language units offer:

- accreditation that promotes customised learning
- potential for candidates to build up spiky profiles
- flexibility - no fixed assessment windows and the facility to customise language content
- suitability for a range of candidates from Key Stage 4 and post-16 candidates to those learning and/or using languages in the workplace
- an applied and work-related focus
- achievement based on satisfactory completion of portfolios of evidence.

These features are maintained in the new language units. They reward candidates for practical language skills, which are increasingly important in today's global workplace.

New Edexcel language qualifications

In addition to the units, new NVQ language qualifications are now available through Edexcel. These are designed for those seeking accreditation in all four skills - *listening, reading, speaking* and *writing* at Level 1, 2 or 3 in a specific language. These qualifications attract school achievement and attainment points and are eligible for LSC funding. It is intended that these new NVQ qualifications will, in response to demand from employer groups, form an integral part of exciting new Modern Apprenticeships for specialist linguists.

Seeking approval for the new language qualifications

If you already offer Edexcel NVQ language units or other NVQs with Edexcel you will need to complete *Form NVQ1* before you can offer these new NVQs.

If you do not already have approval to offer Edexcel NVQs then you will need to complete *Form NVQ3* or *NVQ4*. Full details can be found on our [website](#) under Services for Centres.

Once approved, centres can register candidates through Edexcel Online, through EDI transmission or manually. Please see our [website](#) for more information.

Support materials

Guidance documents will be published on the Edexcel website during October. We are also producing a CD ROM to support the new units and qualifications. The CD ROM includes sector guidance, a logbook for candidates and a list of key FAQs.

Edexcel Levels 2, 3 and 4 NVQs in Advice and Guidance (re-accredited)

Edexcel has been re-accredited to offer the revised Edexcel Levels 2, 3 and 4 NVQs in Advice and Guidance.

These NVQs have been developed by the Standards Setting Body, ENTO.

Who are these qualifications for?

At *Level 2* this NVQ is for those working within advice and guidance services who may not be directly involved in advising clients, but who interact closely with clients when clients first contact such services. Job roles are likely to include receptionist and administrator but will include elements of giving advice, particularly in the early stages of a client's interaction with the service.

At *Level 3* this NVQ is for candidates who provide advice and guidance to clients. It will be applicable for those offering advice and guidance through a range of services including government agencies, schools, colleges, universities, prison services, trade unions, voluntary services, charities and human resources departments.

At *Level 4* this NVQ is for candidates who provide specialist advice and guidance to clients. Those taking the Level 4 may be working towards professional recognition. The NVQ allows recognition of competence for those offering careers education guidance, advocacy and mediation services. The range of services may include government agencies, schools, colleges, universities, prison services, trade unions, voluntary services, charities and human resources departments.

Phasing out the existing NVQs

The current Edexcel Levels 2, 3 and 4 NVQs in Advice and Guidance expired on 31 July 2006. No new candidates can be registered. Existing candidates registered on the current NVQs within Advice and Guidance NVQs may complete their qualifications.

Edexcel Levels 2, 3 and 4 NVQs in Customer Service (re-accredited)

Edexcel has been re-accredited to offer the revised NVQs in Customer Service at Levels 2, 3 and 4.



The Institute of Customer Service has developed these NVQs after extensive consultation with employers. There has been growing demand from employers for a wide cross-section of employees to be equipped with customer service skills. These NVQ qualifications can be used across a wide range of employment sectors, such as the hotel and catering industry, retailers, NHS trusts and local government.

Who are these qualifications for?

The *Level 2* NVQ is for people responsible for delivering customer service and who interact directly with the customer, for example sales or retail staff, staff working on service desks, call centre staff.

The *Level 3* NVQ is for people who are responsible for the delivery of customer service, but who also have to monitor and develop the quality of customer service given and who may be in charge of their own department or team.

The *Level 4* NVQ is for people responsible for planning and implementing customer service within an organisation, for example strategic managers and senior managers who may be responsible for customer service as part of their role, or who may be expected to provide advice on customer service.

The new approach to customer service NVQs

In the Edexcel Levels 2, 3 and 4 NVQs in Customer Service, the option units are divided into *themes* that reflect different aspects of customer service. At each level, *at least one option unit will be taken from each theme to ensure full coverage of the different aspects of customer service*. Candidates therefore need these different themes to be reflected in their work role.

The remaining option units can be taken from any theme, allowing candidates to shape the NVQ according to their own work role and development opportunities.

The themes are:

Foundations - this theme relates to the core units and covers the principles of customer service and organisational rules affecting customer service. It includes the knowledge of the organisation's products and services, and organisational procedures for dealing with customers.

Impression and image - this theme focuses on the impression made by the individual delivering customer service and by the organisation. It includes building a rapport with the customer, dealing with customers in different ways (face to face, in writing or using ICT), living up to the customer

service promise and using customer information to exceed customer expectations.

Delivery - this theme focuses on delivering customer service and building relationships with the customer. It includes issues such as providing a consistent and reliable service, diversity, and working with others (such as service partnerships) to provide customer service.

Handling problems - this theme looks at recognising and resolving customer queries and problems, monitoring customer service problems and handling customer complaints.

Development and improvement - this theme looks at monitoring and improving customer service by developing customer relationships and leading, supporting and working with others to implement improvements. It also covers the analysis of customer feedback and the development of customer service strategies, as well as personal development.

Phasing out the existing NVQs

The current Edexcel Levels 2, 3 and 4 NVQs in Customer Service expired on 31 July 2006. No new candidates can be registered. Existing candidates registered on these NVQs may complete their qualifications.

Edexcel Level 3 and 4 NVQs for Managing Road Passenger Transport (new)

Edexcel has been accredited to offer these brand new qualifications in this developing sector. These NVQs were developed by the SSC, GoSkills. They are designed to be assessed in the workplace.

Who are these Edexcel NVQs for?

At *Level 3* a candidate would be expected to be working in a supervisory position within the bus and coach industry. This might include roles such as a route supervisor, depot supervisor, traffic supervisor or inspector.

At *Level 4* a candidate would be expected to be working in a management position within the bus and coach industry. This might include roles such as a route manager, depot manager or operations manager.

What progression do these NVQs offer?

On completion of the Edexcel Level 3 NVQ for Managing Road Passenger Transport, candidates may progress into other management roles within the transport sector, such as a depot operations manager. Candidates who wish to further their training may progress on to Level 4 qualifications, such as the Edexcel Level 4 NVQ for Managing in Road Passenger Transport.

On completion of the Edexcel Level 4 NVQ for Managing Road Passenger Transport, candidates may progress into senior management roles within the transport sector, such as a commercial manager. Candidates who wish to further their training may progress on to Level 5 qualifications such as the Edexcel Level 5 NVQ in Management.

Why are the units in these NVQs at different levels?

These NVQs have been designed for individuals working in a supervisory or management capacity in the road passenger transport industry. In order to be considered competent in their role, it may be necessary for candidates to undertake units at Levels 3 and 4. Candidates should choose an option unit that is most appropriate for their work role; this may be at Level 3 or 4.

Edexcel Level 2 NVQ in Passenger Carrying Vehicle Driving (Bus and Coach) (new)

The Edexcel Level 2 NVQ in Passenger Carrying Vehicle Driving (Bus and Coach) has been accredited by QCA. This revised NVQ is based on new NOS for bus and coach driving, which have been developed by the SSC, GoSkills, in consultation with the industry.

Who is this NVQ for?

The Edexcel Level 2 NVQ in Passenger Carrying Vehicle Driving (Bus and Coach) is for drivers within the bus and coach industry. This NVQ reflects the changing and demanding roles of drivers to include emphasis on customer service, meeting the needs of passengers with disabilities and managing conflict - as well as driving, of course!

Changes in the assessment regime

A revised assessment strategy means that this qualification is now assessed 100% by portfolio work with no external test.

Transition to the new NOS and NVQ

The Edexcel Level 2 NVQ in Passenger Carrying Vehicle Driving (Bus and Coach) replaces the *bus and coach pathways* on the current Edexcel Level 2 NVQ in Road Passenger Transport. Candidates currently registered on the Edexcel Level 2 NVQ in Road Passenger Transport may complete their qualification. (It is due to expire in December 2006.)

Customers within the bus and coach industry are encouraged to move to the new NOS and the Edexcel Level 2 NVQ in Passenger Carrying Vehicle Driving (Bus and Coach) as soon as possible.

The new standards for taxi, private hire and community transport, which replace the remaining pathways within the Edexcel Level 2 NVQ in Road Passenger Transport, are not yet completed. In view of this the SSC might wish to extend the validity of this qualification to enable a smooth transition for centres. Please check our [website](#) for updates, especially in October 2006.

Support materials

The support materials for this qualification are currently on our website.

Edexcel Level 2 NVQ in Health (Medical Assistance) (new)

The new Edexcel Level 2 NVQ in Health (Medical Assistance) has been accredited by QCA.

The Edexcel Level 2 NVQ in Health (Medical Assistance) has been developed by the SSC, Skills for

Health.

Who is this NVQ for?

The Edexcel Level 2 NVQ in Health (Medical Assistance) is intended for people working in healthcare who support others dealing with immediate injury and severe illness support (eg people supporting nurses and health visitors) and also public service personnel required to administer medical assistance.



Relationship with the suite of Edexcel NVQs in Health

The Edexcel Level 2 NVQ in Health (Medical Assistance) contains units that are currently available within the Health suite of NVQs, which have been brought together to fulfil the needs of those working in this field of health. The units within the new qualification focus strongly on the assistance needing to be given in working within this often critical area of healthcare.

Support materials

The qualification structure for the Level 2 NVQ in Health (Medical Assistance) is available on the Edexcel website in the updated *Sector guidance for centres (Issue 2)*.

The existing Edexcel Level 2 NVQ in Health logbook is appropriate for this qualification, as all the units needed are contained within it.

Applications for approval

The requirements of this qualification means that centres wishing to offer this NVQ must seek approval by completing Form NVQ1 for qualifications approval and Form NVQ3 for centre approval (where applicable) and returning them to Approvals, BTEC Quality Standards. The forms are available on our [website](#).

Product support

A number of products have been published since April 2006. For information about the titles and order codes please see the table below.

Please keep an eye on our website for more information about forthcoming products, as it is updated regularly.

The following products have been published as indicated.

Code	Qualification(s)	Product(s)
N017655 (on CD ROM)	Edexcel Level 2, 3 and 4 NVQs in Customer Service	Sector guidance (W)
N017652	Edexcel Level 2 NVQ in Customer Service	Logbook (P) (W)
N017653	Edexcel Level 3 NVQ in Customer Service	Logbook (P) (W)
N017654	Edexcel Level 4 NVQ in Customer Service	Logbook (P) (W)
N018320 (CD ROM to be published shortly)	Edexcel Level 2, 3 and 4 NVQs in Advice and Guidance	Sector guidance (W)
N018317	Edexcel Level 2 NVQ in Advice and Guidance	Logbook (P) (W)
N018318	Edexcel Level 3 NVQ in Advice and Guidance	Logbook (P) (W)
N018319	Edexcel Level 4 NVQ in Advice and Guidance	Logbook (P) (W)
N017616 (CD ROM)	Edexcel Level 2, 3 and 4 NVQs in Playwork	Sector guidance (W)
N017047	Edexcel Level 2 NVQ in Playwork	Logbook (P) (W)
N017042	Edexcel Level 3 NVQ in Playwork	Logbook (P) (W)
N017356	Edexcel Level 4 NVQ in Playwork	Logbook (P) (W)
NYA (CD ROM in production)	Edexcel Level 3 and 4 NVQs in Managing in Road Passenger Transport	Sector guidance (W)
N017625	Edexcel Level 3 NVQ for Managing in Road Passenger Transport	Logbook (P) (W)
N017626	Edexcel Level 4 NVQ for Managing in Road Passenger Transport	Logbook (P) (W)

Win something!

This month we have five Edexcel-branded 64MB memory sticks to give away to lucky readers of NVQ News. To be in with a chance of receiving a memory stick, just send us the following:

- a response to the FE College questionnaire.

All responses will be put into the draw to receive a memory stick and be featured in the next issue of NVQ News.

NVQ News winners

Well done to the lucky winners of last issue's give away!

Kay Lavery, Adele Davies, Barbara Lambert, Geraldine White and Linda Littlefair have each won an Edexcel promotional goodie bag.

Congratulations!

Spotlight on...

Mission Impossible: Accomplished!

Paul Eeles of the Association of Learning Providers (ALP) explains why bringing together local providers under properly structured regional networks is so important.



As ALP's National Development Manager, responsible for establishing nine regional networks out of the existing networks of work-based learning providers across England, it has often felt like I have embarked on Mission Impossible!

In theory there was a blank canvas when I arrived at ALP. However, ALP had inherited regional groups in some areas and none in others following our merger with NTF (the National Training Federation) in 2002. In addition, there was the role of the local networks to consider, who quite rightly believed they had a role to play at the regional table. Having just left Northamptonshire Training and Development Partnership (NTDP), I also believed that they had a vital role to play in the regional agenda.

In establishing a regional 'network of networks', it became very clear that there were three questions that needed answering: why, how and when? Answer these and regionalisation could be sorted!

The reason 'why' was clear. The LSC had recently appointed regional directors and we had seen the balance of power in the LSC moving from the local LSCs to the regional directors. In addition, the majority of key partners already had a regional presence and structure. Therefore there was an imperative for a provider representative voice to be established regionally.

'How' was an even bigger question than 'why'. There were a range of factors that had to be reviewed. From an ALP perspective, regional groups were not successful at bringing members together. Much of what we were doing reflected the work of local networks of which many of our members were also a part. The geography of many of the regions meant that bringing people together for a meeting was difficult. All regions, with the possible exception of London, claim geography in terms of travel is a unique issue for them.

The reality is that geography is an issue full stop, whatever we establish in the regions. Much of what our partners in the local networks have done has been operational, meeting the needs of providers at a local level. ALP's belief was that our regional agenda should be strategic rather than operational.

In order to bring that strategic outlook about, it was decided that there should be a regional network of networks which included ALP and the local provider networks.

Each regional set-up was at a different stage of its evolution, so a one-size-fits-all approach could not be applied. In the South East, there was the well-established ALPSE which had a council made up of ALP and the local networks, with a coordinator funded by the LSC SE region; in contrast, no activity was taking place in a couple of regions.

My mission in the last 18 months has been to establish a partnership with the local networks and to form a regional network of networks which are strategic and focused on the regional agenda. This has now been done. The regional LSCs each have a group in which they can maintain dialog. In most regions, the network of networks have dialogue with other key partners, such as JCP and Ufi.

My own region, the East Midlands, was the region with the strongest local networks. In linking the local networks and ALP together, this strong partnership now has dialogue with JCP (Jobcentre Plus), Ufi (University for Industry) and LSC regional directors on a quarterly basis, and has had provider conferences for LSC and JCP providers. This year there is to be a joint conference to focus on the shared agenda issues for both JCP and LSC providers in the region, a first in the country, and down to the well-established networks in the East Midlands pooling resources on behalf of the region's providers.

Trust takes time to build and is still building between the local networks and ALP. But having established regional networks of networks, ALP has a platform for ensuring that what it has negotiated on a national basis flows through to the regional agenda. Providers are better supported at a local level through a collaboration of local networks who focus well on the operational issues and add value to their members.

The purpose of the Association of Learning Providers is to influence the education and training agenda to secure on behalf of its members:

- a national skills strategy that meets the needs of employers and learners
- a 14-19 learning curriculum where academic and vocational options are equally valued
- opportunities for learning throughout life to give everyone a chance to succeed
- a government-supported learning market open to all providers offering high quality learning.

You can find out more about ALP and the benefits of membership by visiting our [website](#).

Train to Gain

Sian Owen - Policy

Train to Gain is the new national skills programme that will be introduced across the whole of England by the end of 2006.

It is at the heart of the implementation of the Skills Strategy. The skills strategy is the Government's second skills white paper 'Skills: Getting on in business, getting on at work', published on 22 March 2005. This white paper builds on the first skills white paper published in July 2003.

The aim is for Train to Gain to:

- be employer focused and employer led, with a particular emphasis on identifying employers' needs
- focus on supporting the LSC's priority learners, ie employees without a first full Level 2 qualification (that is, do not have 5 GCSEs at grades A*-C, an NVQ at Level 2 or an equivalent qualification) who also need to improve their basic skills.

It offers employers free training for their employees to achieve a Skills for Life qualification, or a full Level 2 qualification if they do not already have one.

Train to Gain also incorporates other key features, including providing employees with paid time off to train.

Skills brokerage

The skills brokerage service will lead the Train to Gain offer to employers. Skills brokers will be used to identify employers' and employees' skills needs. They will also then be expected to identify flexible and responsive training to meet these needs.

Tenders

In May, Train to Gain providers tendered for contracts to deliver training to employers and employees under this initiative. Tenders had to include evidence of employers being 'hard to reach', employers working in an area in a sector considered important locally, and employees willing to acquire a full Level 2 qualification.

Sector Skills Councils and Sector Skills Agreements - preferred qualifications and future developments

Providers were advised to use available information from SSCs in order to complete their tenders. The LSC has a commitment to ensure that the provision from training providers addresses the sector skills priorities identified in the SSAs whilst meeting targets and priorities.

Train to Gain and apprenticeships

The apprenticeship is the Government's preferred option for vocational learners in the 16-25 age group and the LSC want learners recruited onto the apprenticeship programme wherever possible. Train to Gain is seen as an important way of recruiting employers to offer apprenticeships.

Priorities and targets

Train to Gain will contribute directly to the achievement of Public Service Agreement (PSA) targets and skills-related performance measures including Skills for Life, Level 2 and Level 3 (including apprenticeships) targets, as well as directly supporting the engagement of employers within the wider skills agenda and business development activities.

The national target for skills brokerage engagements with employers is 33,000 for 2006-07 and 52,000 for 2007-08. The engagements are expected to result in a referral of one or more employers to a training solution. A minimum of 51% of employer engagements must be in the 'hard to reach' category.

Based on the skills brokerage target and previous completion rates, the LSC has made planning assumptions on the numbers of learners and completions for Train to Gain. These assumptions are that in 2006-07 Train to Gain funding will support approximately 200,000 full Level 2 starts and 45,500 achievements. For basic skills the assumptions are that there will be approximately 34,525 starts and 3,850 achievements in the same period.

Funding

The LSC has made available £230 million in 2006-07 for the full Train to Gain programme and a further £399 million in 2007-08. Wage compensation for small employers will be funded additionally. In addition to this discrete funding for Train to Gain, employers will also be able to access support from a range of providers who receive FE funds and already support the needs of employers.

The funding for Train to Gain will support employers and their eligible employees to address first full Level 2 and basic skills training needs. Funding guidelines for wage compensation is to be published separately.

Further information

For further information on the Train to Gain initiative, see the Edexcel Funding Policy Watch which can be found in the Policy and Curriculum area of the Edexcel [website](#).

Train to Gain has a dedicated [website](#). Most of the information in this article is taken from the [Invitation to Tender - Training Provision - National Section](#) publication.

What's new?

Coming soon - your Edexcel vocational information pack

To enhance our qualification support provision, we are currently developing a vocational information pack, which will be available to centres in autumn 2006. The Edexcel vocational information pack will contain information covering products and services available to our customers including:

- NVQ qualifications and other Edexcel vocational qualifications
- online services
- publications and product surround to support vocational qualifications
- and much more!

All current Edexcel customers will be provided with a copy, free of charge. You will be able to order additional copies, at a reasonable price.

Keep watching this space for further information.

BTEC Bulletin

Here is a [link](#) to the 12th edition of the electronic *BTEC Bulletin*, another regular update produced by Edexcel.

We aim to produce this every two months to provide a useful information tool to maintain communications about our BTEC vocational qualifications. This provides you with useful headline information about Edexcel's range of BTEC qualifications and services.

Leading quality assurance

Weighing up the evidence - alternative versus traditional approaches

An NVQ lead verifier's viewpoint - Gill Stephenson

For many candidates - and assessors - the task of collecting evidence and presenting it in files seems distinctly at odds with the ethos of NVQs, with their promise of equality of access to accreditation, however proven.

Significant numbers of candidates lose motivation to the point where they drop out of NVQ programmes simply because they find the portfolio route unwieldy, tedious and meaningless. Similarly, assessors devote massive amounts of time - a commodity in short supply - to assisting

their candidates gather paper-based evidence, only to struggle and sometimes fail to obtain one or two key pieces of evidence, eg a witness testimony needed to claim certification.

With the increasing diversity of new technology, the 'traditional' portfolio seems an anachronism we can ill-afford. Nonetheless, some NVQ centres have yet to take on board 'alternative' assessment methods. Edexcel research collated the views of external verifiers and centre staff on the use and the benefits/disbenefits of alternative methods. The feedback obtained from this research and from a number of regional workshops encouraged the production of this guidance.

Issues surrounding alternative assessment

There appear to be a number of firmly rooted perceptions (or misconceptions) about alternative assessment - that it is cumbersome for assessors, takes too long, costs too much and is 'not safe'. Alternative methods are compared unfavourably with the four 'pillars' of the traditional portfolio:

- comfort factor - hard evidence is easier to assess
- remote assessment of portfolios - more time to judge standards met
- gives candidates ownership
- more efficient use of assessor's time - higher workloads possible.

However, if these four pillars are looked at critically, they are not as solid as first thought. The comfort factor of having a file of 'hard' evidence brings with it the problems of storing confidential documents, the potential of loss, and the headache of who looks after the file. It also is exceptionally demotivating, particularly for candidates who chose the NVQ route because they dislike written work, exam-type programmes.

Remote assessment of a portfolio may appear beneficial by allowing the assessor time to take the file away and to spend time evaluating the evidence. Thus, it may be argued, their decisions will be more consistent and accurate. However, this effectively means that the assessor assesses a file rather than what should be the real focus of assessment - the candidate. It also infers that the assessor does not know the NVQ standards well enough to make prompt judgments on evidence.

The third pillar rests on the belief that preparing a portfolio gives the candidate ownership of their evidence, develops skills of self-assessment against the NVQ standards and helps them identify their own learning and development needs. This is generally not born out by experience. The exercise of gathering up evidence into a file cannot give a candidate any more ownership of something that was theirs in the first place! Self-assessment is indeed a valuable part of the NVQ process, but many candidates simply follow action plans 'blindly' and regard the portfolio as a paper chase rather than an opportunity to reflect on their own development.

Equally, the method of presenting evidence should not affect the process of self-assessment. The critical factor in this aspect is the ability of the assessor (and/or adviser) to assist the candidate to use the formative assessment process to identify learning and development needs.

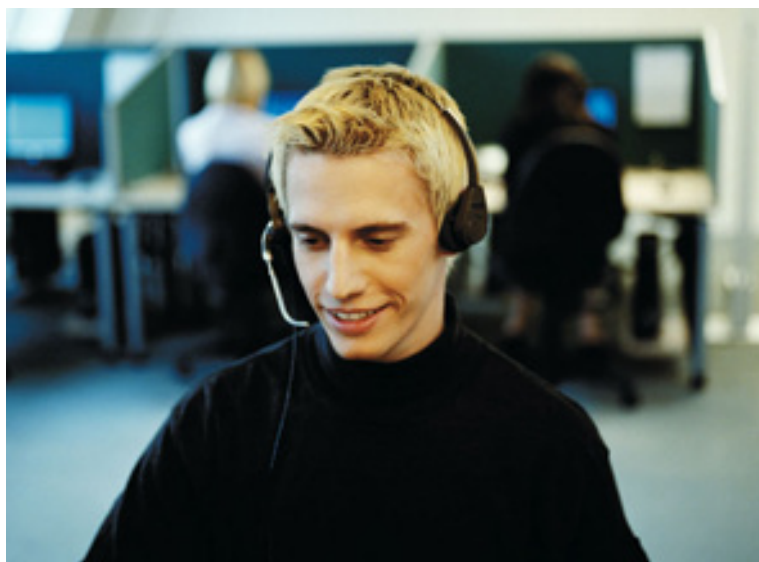
Finally, the portfolio is often felt to be cost-efficient, enabling the assessor to 'parachute in' to the candidate's workplace, carry out assessment, action plan and then move on. The onus is then on the candidate to gather more evidence from their action plan list before the next assessor

visit/meeting. This allows higher assessor workloads.

However, it also leads to problems, particularly in terms of slow progress towards achievement. It also fails to optimise naturally occurring evidence from the candidate's normal work activities - judging consistency becomes a difficulty. There are also concerns about the approach creating barriers to assessment.

By contrast, those who have experienced assessing or being assessed via alternative methods have found the process liberating, challenging, more relevant and accessible. It certainly appears to support the ethos of NVQs (in terms of creating equality of opportunity for all candidates) considerably better than the production of volumes of paper.

Research also strongly suggests that there are cost benefits to be gained from adopting alternative methods - one large employer has confirmed financial cost-benefits plus faster completion/achievement rates. The research has also shown that, where given the option, a significant proportion of candidates prefer to use alternative methods.



So far, so good - so why don't we use it?

Much of the reluctance to use alternative methods springs from lack of confidence in using different assessment methods and - at least to some degree - a resistance to change. Reasonably enough, assessors may 'play safe' to ensure that the external verifier is satisfied with their submissions.

When deciding to test the alternative waters, the following pointers may be useful. Whatever the source of evidence and the method of assessing it, the external verifier looks for:

- a clear audit trail from the candidate to the standards (no guesswork)
- consistent performance, in the workplace, over a period of time
- maintenance of the rules of evidence
- use of a range of evidence sources
- evidence that the candidate's needs have been met
- transparency of judgement
- consistency of judgement.

The external verifier would also prefer to see integrated assessment rather than a piecemeal approach, with evidence used across units to support competence. To do this, assessment should be activity rather than unit driven.

Alternative assessment methods can meet all these requirements and give the added advantage of providing reliable evidence, identified by the candidate and accessible in every sense; for example:

- establish an audit trail by making assessor process notes during a 'walk and talk' session in the candidate's workplace
- obtain verbal witness testimony via audio tape, webcam, face-to-face interview
- observe the candidate using video, webcam
- examine product evidence 'in situ', noting 'what' and 'where' as well as judging compliance with the standards.

Assessor process notes can follow a format similar to a professional discussion/summative interview record. As with all other aspects to assessing, preparation is all important and it is a good idea to plan carefully with the candidate what evidence will be shown, who may be interviewed and for what purpose.

Wherever possible the candidate should be encouraged to produce their own plan or schedule setting out the information needed for the assessor, including when and where witnesses can be seen. The assessor can then prepare their questions and their 'shopping list' of evidence to evaluate competence on as wide a basis as is possible. To record this a simple form may be used with broad headings - eg organisational procedures, personnel, resource management, etc - under which notes can be entered as to the form/source of evidence seen. A separate column down one side can then detail where the evidence was sited. The process notes should be referenced to the standards.

Planning ahead with the candidate will:

- make the most of the time available
- allow witnesses to prepare and reflect on the candidate's performance and abilities prior to discussion with the assessor
- ensure any security or confidentiality restrictions are not contravened
- offer the opportunity to observe the candidate on particular activities/tasks.

If carefully planned, it may be possible to complete assessment in one or two such sessions. Although this methodology requires a considerable time commitment from the assessor, it should be remembered that this is 'up front', rather than spread out over several months.

If carefully planned it may be possible to complete assessment in one or two such sessions. Although this methodology requires a considerable time commitment from the assessor, it should be remembered that this is 'up front', rather than spread out over several months. Staff from centres attending a series of workshops estimated that they could save as much as 80% of their allocated assessment time if they adopted the alternative methodology described, rather than the more traditional weekly/monthly hourly visit (to look at collected evidence and action plan the candidate) and assessed their candidate on two or three longer assessments, followed by a summative

interview.

When you turn this into hours saved, and costs reduced it all starts to add up!

For more guidance about offering approaches to evidence collection check out Edexcel NVQ general guidance for centres on our [website](#) and also on all our NVQ CD ROMs.

Using e-portfolios

Centres use a wide range of different e-portfolio packages. They range from simple vehicles for organising and tracking evidence, to fully electronic and interactive versions. We welcome such initiatives and would be interested in hearing about both assessors' and candidates' experiences with them, so we can share this through NVQ News.

With so many types of e-portfolios available, Edexcel does not endorse any electronic tracking/portfolio products at the moment. In addition, we do not require our external verifiers to be able to use any of the electronic tracking/portfolio products available.

It remains the centres' responsibility for ensuring evidence can be accessed by the EV at a visit. This may mean that, where an e-portfolio is in use, a member of the centre staff will need to be available to assist the EV to access the evidence.

Hot off the press

Erratum notification

Edexcel Level 3 NVQ in Health (General Healthcare Support)

Centres are advised that there is an error in the eligibility requirements for achievement in the structure of the Edexcel Level 3 NVQ in Health (General Healthcare Support). This erratum notice relates to the *Sector guidance for centres* and the *Level 3 Logbook for candidates* publications and the change takes effect immediately.

The updated eligibility requirements for the Edexcel Level 3 NVQ in Health (General Healthcare Support) can be found [here](#).

Please note you must have approval for any Pathway Specific competences offered as part of this qualification.

A corrected version of the *Sector guidance for centres* document can be found on our website.

If you think you have candidates whose certification claim might be affected by this issue, or if you have any queries, please email NVQHealthHelp@edexcel.org.uk. Please give details of your particular issue, together with your centre number and candidate registration number(s) if applicable.

EV job opportunities

During the summer, Edexcel recruited a number of external verifiers across various sectors and geographical areas. Due to this successful recruitment, the external verifier workforce is currently full. However, if you are interested in becoming an external verifier for Edexcel, please refer to this [link](#) where details of sector and geographical vacancies will be posted.

SSC changes to NOS

Incremental change to NOS and NVQs from SSC/SSBs

Some SSCs and SSBs are proposing changes to specified NOS and NVQs, this is an advance warning that these will come. The SSCs in some instances are still deliberating the exact nature of the incremental change. Please keep an eye on the NVQ section of our website and to look out for information, in this and future issues of NVQ News, as well as linked to the qualifications in question.

SSC/SSB incremental changes coming up

SSC/SSB	NOS/NVQ qualifications	Type of changes	Target date for introduction
CfA	Edexcel Level 2, 3 and 4 NVQs in Business and Administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarification of unit content. • Clarification on the use of imported units. 	Work in progress at SSC - likely date for implementation January 2007.
e-skills	Edexcel Levels 1 and 2 NVQs in Contact Centre Operations and Levels 3 and 4 NVQs for Contact Centre Professionals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Addition of new units. • Change of status for some optional AoCs. • Increased points value for specified AoCs. 	Letter from Edexcel to Centres in July 2006. See website as well.
e-skills	Edexcel Levels 1 and 2 NVQs for IT Practitioners and Level 3 NVQ for IT Professionals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased points value for area of competence (AoC) 'Developing personal and organisational effectiveness' - see new qualification structure attached. • Clarification on use of imported units. 	Letter from Edexcel to Centres in July 2006. See website as well.
e-skills	Edexcel Levels 1 and 2 NVQs in Contact Centre Operations and Levels 3 and 4 NVQs for Contact Centre Professionals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wider interpretation and use of the sector specific unit. • Increased flexibility for use 	Letter from Edexcel to Centres in July 2006. See website as well.

		of specialist or bespoke software units.	
e-skills	Edexcel Levels 1, 2 and 3 NVQ for IT Users	Clarification on the use of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • imported units • specialist and bespoke units • policy on expert witnesses. 	Letter from Edexcel to Centres in July 2006. See website as well.
HABIA	Edexcel Level 1 NVQ in Hairdressing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change in status of units from mandatory to optional and optional to mandatory. • New optional units being added. • Removal of optional units. 	With QCA for agreement - due to go live on 1 September 2006.
HABIA	Edexcel Level 2 NVQ in Hairdressing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change in status of units from mandatory to optional and optional to mandatory. 	With QCA for agreement - due to go live on 1 September 2006.
IDeA	Edexcel Level 3 NVQs in Watch Management, Operations in the Community, Control Operations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changes to evidence requirements, and assessment strategy. 	We are currently seeking approval for these amendments from QCA.
Skills for Health	Edexcel Level 2 and 3 NVQs within Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New non-clinical qualifications. 	No date as yet - work in progress at SSC.

Changes to the NVQs in Information Technology, Communication Technology and Contact Centres

Ana Abreu - Qualifications Development

Changes to the National Occupational Standards (NOS) and qualification structures for these qualifications were introduced at the start of April.

e-Skills UK, the sector skills council for these subjects, has decided to adopt an incremental change model to manage the process of keeping the NOS up to date. As a part of this, and following feedback from centres and awarding bodies, e-Skills has agreed changes to the NOS and qualification structures for IT, Communication Technology and Contact Centres.

These changes mean that the area of competence (AoC) 'Developing personal and organisational effectiveness' now has an increased points value of five at all levels. This change was effective from 1 April 2006.

All imported units, with the exception of single-element Project Management units, are to be allocated a unit value (UV) determined by the lowest level at which the unit is used by the

originating sector body. For example, a unit used within an originating sector body's qualifications at both Level 3 and Level 4 is only ever allocated a UV equivalent to Level 3 (ie 30).

To reflect this change, centre guidance and candidate guidance documents will be revised and posted on our website. An updated issue of the CD ROM, containing all the materials relating to this qualification, will be available in the near future.

Services

Stay alert!

Trevor Owen-Williams - e-Marketing

No time to check Edexcel's websites for new information? Then let our email alert service do the work for you!

We launched this free service last year to save customers from having to make constant visits to our websites to check if anything has been added. The popularity of this service is growing, with some 12,000 users currently subscribed to various areas of our websites. A good example of its success has been our website for DiDA (our new Diploma in Digital Applications suite of qualifications), which already has nearly 2000 subscribers.

The service provides great flexibility, allowing you to specify the rate at which you want alerts arriving in your inbox - daily, weekly or monthly. And there is no limit to the number of areas to which you can be subscribed at any one time. You can also decide the breadth of information you are alerted about by subscribing to different levels of our main website.

For example, if you want to be alerted to changes made to all the NVQs in the 'Qualifications' area of our website, you would subscribe to the [main NVQ page](#). More likely, however, you want to be kept up to date with activity in a specific NVQ sector, like Customer Service. So you would subscribe to the [Customer Service page](#). If you are only interested in updates to the [Level 3 NVQ in Customer Service page](#), you subscribe at that level.

All you need to do is visit the web page in which you are interested, click on the '**Get email alerts for this topic**' link at the top of that page, log in and follow the instructions.

All the usual management tools that you would expect from a support service are easily accessible. Just visit your email alerts account by clicking on the '**My email alerts**' link that resides at the top of every web page and you can change your personal details, email address or password. And, if you change your mind about your interests, you can easily change the rate at which you receive alerts or unsubscribe from them altogether. Another useful feature is the 'suspend my account' tool, which prevents your inbox from getting cluttered up with alerts while you are away for any extended time.

If you are already registered with Edexcel Online, you do not need to re-register for this service; you can simply use the same log-in details to subscribe to alerts.

You can get more information about this service by visiting our email alerts [help](#) and [FAQ](#) pages.

So what are you waiting for? Visit the web pages of interest to you and stay alert!

Profile

Natalie Brightwell

Talks to Sarah Willoughby



In August 2001, Natalie Brightwell started at Edexcel; five years on and she is an NVQ adviser within the BTEC Operations team. She began as a coordinator within the Quality Standards team, specialising in NVQs - working to ensure and maintain their quality. During her time at Edexcel she has been involved in running national workshops, supported centres by attending visits and been an important link between Edexcel and the NVQ external verifier team, involved in the recruitment, selection and training processes.

Importantly, she is also a member of the NVQ News editorial team, so she helps hunt out the great features for you to read.

Natalie's journey with NVQs began long before joining the company. Her first experience with NVQs was as a candidate. After completing a degree in Environmental Science, she became interested in horticulture and undertook a qualification in Horticulture which incorporated a Level 2 NVQ in Amenity Horticulture. Natalie then gained a position as an NVQ assessor with a training provider during which time she obtained her D32/33/34 Assessor Awards with Edexcel. An opportunity then arose to work as an assessor/internal verifier at the centre where she had completed her NVQ which involved visiting apprentices in their workplaces. Many miles were clocked up travelling around Kent visiting candidates in unique places, for example an English Heritage site and first division cricket club, to name a few.

When asked what she has enjoyed most about her work at Edexcel, she said it was supporting centres and EVs and learning about how different sectors operate and ways in which evidence is collected and presented. *'Being innovative in helping to make the NVQ process a rewarding experience for candidates, automating processes and making them slicker!'* are a few others.

It is obvious that Natalie has a strong enthusiasm for NVQs and she sings the praises of these occupational qualifications. Natalie's work across NVQs has brought strength to her work at Edexcel. Her work with both training providers and colleges brings a special depth and understanding and she is happy to be able to offer views from both sides of the fence.

Away from work Natalie is a keen runner: she did the London Marathon with a work colleague and managed to raise a massive £2000 for an education-related charity. Of course no girl can resist shopping and she names London's Covent Garden as one of her favourite places to do so. Handy for her, then, that it's only a few minutes from the office!

Your news and views

Don't forget we want to hear from you and find out what you want to see in the future editions of *NVQ News*. Just send us an email at NVQnews@edexcel.org.uk and you could see your views published in the next 'Voice it'.

We would also love for you to tell us a 'good news' story or about an achievement - if possible, could you also try to supply a photo to publish along with your article if yours is chosen.

NVQ News is a free additional service for our centres but if you prefer not to receive this newsletter just send an email to NVQnews@edexcel.org.uk with 'Unsubscribe' in the subject line.