

# National Qualifications Framework – Edexcel Level 1, 2 & 3 NVQs for IT Users

## What are the key differences in the new Edexcel Level 1, 2 and 3 NVQs for IT Users?

The key differences in these new NVQs are as follows:

- a new format and terminology for the units – for example, an Area of Competence at a specified level equates with a unit
- unit titles which function at three differing levels – creates a flexible approach to achievement
- ability to take a certain proportion of units at differing levels within a qualification- which will give candidates opportunities to take levels of units suited to their abilities and their workplace needs
- Unit values have been defined by e-skills UK for each level of the Areas of Competence (see the structure table below)
- flexibility for the contextualisation of the AoC's to the workplace
- enhanced role for Expert Witness testimony
- a wider, structured application of Accreditation of Prior Achievement (APA), facilitated by an e-skills UK database.

Further information on all these points are available in our *Guidance to Centres*, which can be accessed on our website at [www.edexcel.org.uk/qualifications](http://www.edexcel.org.uk/qualifications) in the NVQ sections.

## What is the structure of the new NVQs?

The structure of the NVQ is below. This is a very new approach to NVQs and you will need to read carefully the full information provided in our *Guidance for Centres*, which you can find on our website at [www.edexcel.org.uk/qualifications](http://www.edexcel.org.uk/qualifications) in the NVQ sections.

The following table lists the Unit Values for each of the units. There is a single mandatory unit at each level.

Unit titles	Unit values		
	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
Make Selective Use of IT (Mandatory)	15	25	35
Operate a computer	10	20	30
IT trouble-shooting for users	5	15	25
IT maintenance for users	5	15	25
IT security for users	5	15	25
Internets and intranets	5	15	25
E-mail	5	15	25
Word processing	10	20	30
Spreadsheets	10	20	35
Databases	10	20	35
Websites	10	20	35
IT artwork and images	10	20	35
IT Presentations	10	20	30
Specialist or bespoke software	10	20	30
Evaluate the impact of IT	5	15	25

### **What does a candidate have to complete to achieve the qualification?**

Depending on what level they take, Candidates will have to take the Mandatory Unit *at that level* (worth 15, 25 and 35 points at Levels 1, 2 and 3 respectively) and then gather enough unit value points from each of the optional units to achieve the threshold points total.

For level 1 this is 40 points.

For level 2: 100 points

For level 3: 180 points.

At least 50% of the unit value of the **optional** units must be achieved at the level of the qualification. These values (rounded) are as follows:

15 for level 1

40 for level 2

75 for level 3

Other than these restrictions, units may be taken from any level to fulfil the points threshold. Try the ITQ calculator to work out the potential options you have available (see below).

### **If a candidate accrues more unit value points than is required, is this a problem?**

Not at all, so long as they achieve the threshold values for that level, including the correct proportion of option units matching the level of the mandatory units, extra points are not an issue. Extra units can be claimed as additional individual certificates.

### **If a candidate fails to complete the whole qualification can they claim individual unit certification?**

Yes, individual units can be claimed. In addition, a candidate can return to the qualification at a later date to complete it, provided the qualification is still live. However, if unit certification has been given the candidate will need to register for the qualification again.

### **Does the 10-week rule still apply?**

Yes, certification cannot be granted until at least 10 weeks after candidates are registered.

### **What is a Specialist or Bespoke Unit?**

The Specialist or Bespoke software unit makes use of any customised or relevant company-specific software that is found in the student's workplace. By its nature it requires the student to gain a working proficiency with a non-standard software application (eg accounting software).

### **How do I gain approval for a Specialist or Bespoke Unit?**

Centre staff will need to submit an IT NVQs application for a Specialist or Bespoke unit. This will be similar to those in use currently for BTEC Meeting Local Needs (MLN). The form and guidance notes for this will be on the website (Approval forms) by the end of September 2004.

### **How can key skills in communication be claimed?**

If the delivery of the majority of the NVQ is by e-learning then it may be difficult to demonstrate or evidence a full range of communications skills. Each qualification naturally does focus on the skills of the IT User, however, a mapping of where key skills can be met in the qualification is in Appendix A of our *Guidance for Centres*. This shows there are significant opportunities within the units at each level for the demonstration and evidencing of key skills. In terms of communication, the Mandatory unit, which has to be assessed in the workplace, will be an excellent opportunity for consolidating such assessment opportunities.

### **Can I transfer candidates on the existing NVQs over to the new NVQs for IT Users?**

Yes, you are strongly recommended to transfer any candidates you feel would benefit from the move to the new standards. Candidates who have completed less than 50 % of their current NVQ programme would benefit enormously. e-skills have provided a transition map (at Appendix 1 of this document), which will help you in this process. You should use the normal Edexcel documentation for such transfers (Form SA2). Copies of the Form SA2 can be found on the Edexcel website at [www.edexcel.org.uk/sfc](http://www.edexcel.org.uk/sfc), or be requested from our Customer Services on 0870 240 9800.

### **Am I required to transfer my candidates over to the new NVQs for IT Users?**

No, you are not required to transfer candidates across to the new NVQs. Candidates who were registered between January 2004 and end of July 2004 can continue with their existing qualifications. However, we would strongly recommend that those candidates who registered between the 1 June and 31 July, who are likely to have completed less than 50% of their programme, should be transferred to the more flexible new NVQs as this could benefit them enormously.

### **What happens when the External Verifier visits?**

The EV will follow the normal Code of Practice and will sample candidates' work accordingly. EVs will be directed to include the mandatory units within the sample.

### **What exactly is the e-skills UK recognition database and how will it work?**

We have already mapped the following qualifications against the new NOS for IT Users, at unit level, and submitted them to e-skills UK. e-skills UK are establishing a database using similar information from a number of Awarding Bodies. This will be accessible to centres on the e-skills UK website. You or a candidate will be able to enter in a unit title from an Edexcel BTEC qualification and see what the APA situation is against the NOS. This will be a dynamic database with new qualifications being added over time. This database will be administered by e-skills UK and so further details can be obtained from their website. Currently Edexcel have mapped the units of the BTEC Nationals and BTEC Firsts for IT Practitioners against the units of the NVQ and we will soon be providing maps for the GNVQ Foundation and Intermediate units in ICT.

### **How does the APA/APL system work?**

The Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL) will work as before (please refer to the Edexcel policy and guidance document – APL 03/01, which can be found on the Edexcel website at [www.edexcel.org.uk/VirtualContent/59386/APL\\_completed.pdf](http://www.edexcel.org.uk/VirtualContent/59386/APL_completed.pdf)). The Accreditation of Prior Achievement (APA) will use the e-skills maintained database of Vocationally Related Qualifications, which have been mapped (at unit level) against units within the NVQ. Where prior achievement has been established, a candidate claiming a VRQ unit from the Database can make an APA claim against the related NVQ unit. Where there are gaps in knowledge, understanding or skills, these must be made up within the NVQ. Skill gaps can be filled by undertaking diagnostic tasks, additional tasks within the Mandatory unit or within other units being assessed in the workplace.

### **Can a centre adapt the Edexcel provided logbook documentation or design their own evidence collection and tracking forms?**

Yes of course, so long as the forms are fit for purpose and provide quick and easy access to the materials, then centre-designed logbooks are acceptable. Centres may also wish to explore and to make use of some of the commercially available e-portfolios.

### **What is the ITQ Calculator?**

The ITQ Calculator is a program that allows you to determine how many units and at which level the student needs in order to design the qualification structure for each candidate. It has been produced by the LSC and will be available through our support materials.

### How can I find out about the Assessment Strategy?

The Assessment Strategy is in our *Guidance to Centres* in Section 3. This is on our website at [www.edexcel.org.uk/qualifications](http://www.edexcel.org.uk/qualifications) in the NVQ section.

### What does the assessment strategy cover?

The assessment strategy provides details of the variety of types of assessment evidence that can be used to build portfolios. Essentially the same types of assessment evidence will be acceptable as in previous models of the NVQ however, in order to increase take-up and employer participation it was essential to complement the updated content with more streamlined assessment processes without reducing their validity.

It is the centre's responsibility to ensure that they comply with all aspects of the assessment strategy. Our External Verifier will check this during a verification visit.

The changes and additions are described fully in our *Guidance to Centres* (Section 3), however, the most significant of the new features and changes are outlined below.

- The strategy allows for an enhanced role for 'expert witnesses' from the workplace who are familiar with the standards.
- It is important to note that the evidence for the **mandatory** unit **must** still derive from the workplace. Further details of what will be acceptable as simulated evidence are described in the full *Guidance* document.
- The evidence for the **optional** units can be assessed:
  - using **simulation** where naturally occurring workplace evidence is not available, or
  - by a combination of certification of knowledge and skills (from a validated qualification such as the Edexcel Level 2 BTEC First Diploma for IT Practitioners) and workplace or simulated evidence.
- It will be possible for employer programmes of learning to count towards achievement of the NVQ.
- In addition we actively encourage the use of electronic portfolio management tools. The systems may be either traditionally paper based, full e-portfolios or combinations of the two. We will be making available to centres, in the early autumn, the tools in terms of either Word or Excel files that will facilitate the easy production of bespoke portfolios and the efficient storage and access to items of evidence.

### When will the Specifications and the Support Materials be available to centres?

The following materials (in the table below) will be made freely available electronically to registered centres by early September 2004 through a new secure web site. If you wish for pre-publication copies of the support materials before that time please send an e-mail to [itq@edexcel.org.uk](mailto:itq@edexcel.org.uk)

Those indicated in the right-hand column below will also be on our website - [www.edexcel.org.uk/qualifications](http://www.edexcel.org.uk/qualifications) and then select the appropriate option for NVQ's.

Materials	Available on Website
Guidance for Centres - containing <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Structure and unit format</li><li>➤ Assessment strategy and guidance</li><li>➤ Key Skills mapping to NOS for IT Users</li><li>➤ Guidance for portfolio production</li><li>➤ Candidate case studies</li></ul>	Yes
Candidate Guidance - containing <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Exemplar unit records with guidance</li><li>➤ Guidance on constructing portfolios</li><li>➤ Exemplar Portfolio recording forms</li></ul>	No
e-skills UK –National Occupational Standards	Yes
Unit recording forms: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Unit records – full set in Word format</li><li>➤ Unit Records – full set in Excel format</li><li>➤ Assessment guidance for each unit</li></ul>	No
Case studies ITQ Calculator Further developing support materials Exemplar Powerpoint presentations for use by centres	No

### What is the relationship between Overviews and Components?

Overviews provide the broad outlines at each level within an Area of Competence. Each unit contains a number of **components**, which provide more detail of the knowledge and skills that must be evidenced. The evidence is referenced against the **component details**.

### If candidates produce evidence in electronic form, how can this be authenticated?

Centres should consult with their EV in order to ensure that an acceptable verification process is in place. Some physically signed forms may be necessary, however the large bulk of the form completion may remain electronic. The use of a User Name plus Password is often adequate to confirm identity but centres must be sure that this form of communication is secure. All candidates must sign an Evidence of Authenticity stating that all of the work submitted is their own and this must be a physical sheet of paper.

**If a candidate is using evidence from work, how do they deal with issues of potentially compromising sensitive information (e.g. samples of databases or spreadsheets from a business)?**

Centres should discuss the use of such evidence with the employer and come to an arrangement that allows the assessor (and potentially verifiers) to check that the evidence is acceptable. This could involve for example some editing of the material to remove names, facts or figures. If this approach is not possible then centre should explore with the workplace the use of a statement from an expert witness such as the **candidate's** line manager.

**Who could fulfil the role of Expert Witness within the workplace?**

A typical person could be the candidate's line-manager. They would have the necessary technical experience and contact with the candidate. Centres must be sure that the expert witness understands the standards and may offer training to the employer. Such expert witnesses may be encouraged to take assessors qualifications but this is not essential, as the assessor is still the person that accepts or rejects the witness evidence produced.

**Should an Expert Witness Statement be on headed notepaper?**

Centres must be able to ensure authentication of evidence whether or not headed notepaper is used.

**Can Professional Discussions be used?**

The question and answer form can also be used to record professional discussions. These discussions are typically based around some product evidence and used to clarify that the standards have been met.

**If a centre or employer creates their own materials to plug any gaps in knowledge for candidates, are these admissible evidence?**

Yes, but Centres should consult with their EV to check that the materials they are using are appropriate.

**Are centres/employers free to generate their own simulation exercises?**

Yes, but they must take account of the rules for simulation and the realistic working environment (RWE) as defined in the Guidance to Centres, especially the assessment strategy from e-skills. You can access the *Guidance for Centres* on our website at [www.edexcel.org.uk/qualifications](http://www.edexcel.org.uk/qualifications) and then select the appropriate option for NVQ's.

**Work experience through local employers is getting harder to access, so how can competency be shown outside of the 'real world' of the workplace?**

The new structures and assessment strategy will allow more candidates to access this qualification through the use of simulation but the simulations must be designed to realistically reflect the conditions and restrictions of the workplace- the realistic work environment. However, the Mandatory units must be achieved and assessed in the workplace for the candidate to complete the qualification.

**Should simulation be considered as product evidence or supplementary evidence?**

Generally, simulation generates product evidence, but could be supplementary where there are gaps in the candidates APA.

**Should simulation be favoured over work-based evidence?**

No, simulation is normally considered where work-based evidence cannot be produced readily. It cannot be considered at all for the Mandatory units, which must be assessed in the workplace.

**Will Edexcel support or approve the creation of Real World Environments for the purposes of simulation?**

Edexcel will support and accept evidence from centres developing real world environments such as training offices in order to provide candidates with opportunities to produce evidence. However, care should be taken to ensure that the environment matches the guidance as provided in our *Guidance to Centres*.

**Does Simulation/Real Work Environment have to 'exactly' mirror the real work place?**

Not at all, many successful IT roles can be fulfilled away from a physical workplace, in fact the working environments for those working and using IT are quite varied. Many individuals work at home for all or part of their time and this does not invalidate the real world nature of their evidence. However, a typical classroom is not an appropriate environment for simulation or RWE as candidates will not be subjected to the same levels of interruptions or other constraints.

## e-skills UK IT User S/NVQ Transition Arrangements



### Draft 1.1

This document outlines the opportunities for credit transfer from S/NVQs based on the 1999 National Occupational Standards (NOS) in Using IT to S/NVQs based on the 2003 NOS for IT Users.

These credit transfer opportunities are intended for candidates who have been working towards the old S/NVQs but wish to transfer to the new ones (ITQ). To qualify for credit transfer under these arrangements candidates must either:

- have achieved the relevant unit certification(s) within the previous three years<sup>1</sup>; or
- have a portfolio of evidence which has been assessed, within the last six months, as meeting the evidence requirements of the relevant unit(s).

In the latter case the evidence should be retained as part of the candidates overall portfolio of evidence.

### Credit transfer

Table 1 provides (in columns 2 & 3) details of the old S/NVQ unit(s) which can be credited against the specified new ones (in column 1). Full credit transfer is indicated in **bold font** together with any additional criteria. In some cases full credit is not possible but old S/NVQ units provide an obvious source of evidence, these are indicated in *italic font*.

For example:

New AoC "Use IT to exchange information" at Level 2<sup>2</sup> may be obtained by credit transfer from old unit 205.

New AoC "E-mail" at level 2 may be obtained by credit transfer from old unit 205 but only if performance evidence covers e-mail use.

### Level 1

No credit transfer is available at Level 1. The new S/NVQs are substantially different from the old ones.

### Mandatory unit

No credit transfer is available for the mandatory AoC "Make selective use of IT".

<sup>1</sup> As specified in Section 2.1.1 of the Assessment Strategy for S/NVQs for IT Users (April 2004).

<sup>2</sup> Throughout this document 'Level' refers to S/NVQ level.

Table 1.

**Credit transfer***Evidence opportunities*

<b>New AOC Title</b>	<b>Old Level 2 units</b>	<b>Old Level 3 units</b>
Make selective use of IT	none	none
Use IT systems	<b>201 &amp; 206 (both units)</b>	<i>206, 301, 302, 303</i>
Operate a computer	<i>201, 204, 206</i>	<i>206, 301, 302, 303</i>
IT trouble-shooting for users	<i>201, 204, 206</i>	<i>206, 301, 302, 303</i>
IT maintenance for users	<i>201, 204, 206</i>	<i>206, 301, 302, 303</i>
IT security for users	none	none
Use IT to exchange information	<b>205</b>	<b>327</b>
Internet and intranets	<i>205</i>	<i>327</i>
E-mail	<b>205 (if e-mail used)</b>	<b>327</b>
Word processing software	<b>202</b>	<b>305</b>
Spreadsheet software	<b>203</b>	<b>306</b>
Database software	<b>212 (but check range of queries)</b>	<b>311</b>
Website software	none	none
Artwork and imaging software	none	<i>312</i>
Presentation software	none	<b>326</b>
Specialist or bespoke software	none	none
Evaluate the impact of IT	none	none