

# e-skills uk

Information and Communication Technologies  
and Contact Centres

S/NVQ Qualification Structure

Version 2.1 – Submission to UKCG December 2005

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## 1. Flexibility of Qualifications

The need for a much more flexible approach to the design of qualification structures for S/NVQs has featured prominently in consultation responses. Flexibility of qualification design is required to match both the increasing diversity of job roles within the IT, Telecommunications and Contact Centre sectors.

One extreme suggestion was for a total 'pick-and-mix' approach using any available S/NVQ unit from any sector. The least change option suggested was simply for more flexibility within existing mandatory and optional unit structures.

Allowing complete flexibility of unit choice would pose considerable practical problems for the regulatory and awarding bodies. More importantly such unfettered flexibility would not produce coherent, relevant or comparable qualifications and is therefore rejected as a serious option.

There was substantial support for the concept of credit accumulation leading to an award. *A value based approach to the design of qualifications has been adopted.*

### 1.1 Sector-specific Units & Hybrid Qualifications

The diversity of application and use of ICT needs to be reflected by the availability of imported (sector-specific) units within qualifications. Currently only specified units can be incorporated within qualifications. *We propose to allow the inclusion of **any** unit which has been demonstrated to be relevant to the candidate's job role.*

The qualification structure currently under development is wholly within the e-skills remit and therefore imported units are in the minority. However the need for hybrid qualifications is recognised and these will be the subject of further development.

### 1.2 Matching job profiles

The degree of flexibility within the choice of units must meet the needs of the potential users of the qualifications. The new Information and Communication Technologies and Contact Centre S/NVQs are intended to be appropriate and manageable for people in a wide range of work roles.

Current qualifications implicitly assume that a candidate operates at a uniform level<sup>1</sup> across all aspects of their job. This does not reflect the reality that, for example, an overall level 3 role often includes some higher or lower activities. The ability to accommodate this in qualifications was seen as highly desirable, subject to some constraints.

*The NOS for Information and Communication Technologies and Contact Centre have been developed to reflect the range and depth of competence that different people may need in their work roles.*

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout this document 'level' refers to the currently (January 2004) defined S/NVQ levels.

The need for both 'specialist' (narrow) and 'generalist' (broad) awards has also been identified. These are not mutually exclusive and the *qualification structure incorporates both types of award*.

Allowing flexibility in the choice of units raises concerns as to the coherence, relevance and comparability of qualifications. However experience with the existing qualification structures has shown that it is very difficult to predict the combinations of functions which make up real job roles. In addition these combinations can be subject to significant change within the qualification lifetime.

### **1.3 Different sizes of award**

As previously noted there was substantial support for the concept of credit accumulation leading to an award. This approach could be used to define different 'sizes' of awards (e.g. the BTEC system of Awards (6 unit), Certificates (12 unit) and Diplomas (18 unit)) at the same level.

*This concept has not been taken forward at this point.*

## 2. Units

### 2.1 Format

A radical approach to the design of National Occupational Standards has been adopted in which Areas of Occupational Competence (AOCs) have been developed. These AOCs define competent performance in a discrete functional area and cover all applicable S/NVQ levels.

Awarding Bodies will need to develop S/NVQ type units, which have clear assessable outcomes, from these AOCs. S/NVQ unit content can be derived from AOCs by extracting, **at the desired level**:

- the statement of competence;
- the knowledge and understanding to be applied;
- the skills and techniques to be exhibited; and
- the associated knowledge and skills components<sup>2</sup>.

Differentiation between levels can exist in any or all of the parts of an AOC. For example components can have the same content at all levels (defined at level 1 or 2 say with higher levels referring to the lower level. In this case differentiation will be exhibited in the knowledge/skills statement or the statement of competence or both.

Alternatively a component may build content from level to level. As a specific instance 'working procedures' is just such a skills component which describes organisational practices for work on hardware & equipment. In this case the skills statement also provides level differentiation, the skills to be exhibited are described as:

- following specified **working procedures** (Level 1);
- following relevant **working procedures** (Level 2);
- providing technical advice to support **working procedures** (Level 3); and
- creating and implementing **working procedures** (level 4)

### 2.2 Unit Values

Unit values (UV) have been used to establish a value-based approach to qualification design. UVs are an internal mechanism designed to assist Awarding Bodies in developing S/NVQs. UVs do not, nor are they intended to, have any explicit relationship with any other external credit transfer or accumulation scheme. e-skills UK will work with the relevant authorities to agree the positioning within external frameworks of S/NVQs based on these standards.

The approach adopted is intentionally simple and UVs are not intended for general publication. UVs are intended as a straightforward mechanism for enabling a flexible qualifications structure while ensuring that all qualifications based on the new standards are of a similar 'weight' or amount of content.

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<sup>2</sup> Any component content at lower levels must also be included. E.g. a level 3 unit must include component content at levels 1, 2 & 3.

A base value of 10, 20 and 30 has been established levels for 1, 2 and 3 respectively. Individual units have been assigned values according to amount of content on a small (UV = base value - 5), medium (UV = base value) and large (UV = base value + 5) basis. In other words, these UVs are purely based on the amount of content and do not relate in any way to the level of demand on the candidate which is determined by the S/NVQ level. A 'small' level 2 unit has the same UV (15) as a 'large' level 1 unit.

### **3. Qualifications**

#### **3.1 Qualification Titles**

##### **3.1.1 Information Technology**

Level 1 and 2: S/NVQ for Information Technology Practitioners  
Level 3, 4 & 5: S/NVQ for Information Technology Professionals

##### **3.1.2 Communication Technology**

Level 1 and 2: S/NVQ for Communication Technology Practitioners  
Level 3, 4 & 5: S/NVQ for Communication Technology Professionals

##### **3.1.3 Contact Centres**

Level 1 and 2: S/NVQ in Contact Centre Operations  
Level 3, 4 & 5: S/NVQ for Contact Centre Professionals

#### **3.2 Qualification Structure and Unit Value Requirements**

To achieve a full IT, Telecommunications or Contact Centre S/NVQ candidates must achieve a minimum total of UVs. These are:

- 40 UVs for a level 1 qualification;
- 100 UVs for level 2;
- 180 UVs for level 3;
- 280 UVs for level 4; and
- 350 UVs for level 5.

##### **3.2.1 Structural Rules**

1. Each qualification must contain:
  - AOC 'Develop personal and organisational effectiveness' at least at the level of the qualification for qualifications at levels 1 to 4 or at level 4 for qualifications at level 5; and
  - AOC 'Health & Safety in ICT and Contact Centres' at least at Level 1.
2. Each AOC can contribute to a qualification at one level only.
3. At least 60% of the total unit value must be achieved at the level of the qualification. These values (rounded) are as follows:
  - 25 for level 1;
  - 60 for level 2;
  - 110 for level 3;

- 170 for level 4; and
  - 210 for level 5.
4. A maximum of two units may be chosen from the restricted option list.
  5. In addition qualifications must adhere to any relevant qualification framework<sup>3</sup> criteria.

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<sup>3</sup> Credit and Qualification Framework for Wales (CQFW) [www.elwa.ac.uk](http://www.elwa.ac.uk)  
National Qualifications Framework (NQF) [www.qca.org.uk](http://www.qca.org.uk)  
Northern Ireland Credit Accumulation and Transfer System (NICATS) [www.nicats.ac.uk](http://www.nicats.ac.uk)  
Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) [www.scqf.org.uk](http://www.scqf.org.uk)

### 3.3 Unit titles and values

#### 3.3.1 Contact Centres

AOC Title Units at each level will be differentiated by adding the level indicator as a suffix. (E.g. Customer Care 1, Customer Care 2 etc.)	Unit Values				
	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
Contact Centre systems and technology	10	20	30	40	50
Customer care	10	20	30	40	50
<b>Develop personal and organisational effectiveness</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>40</b>	
Direct selling and customer acquisition in Contact Centres	10	20	30	40	50
E-mail	5	15	25		
<b>Health and Safety in ICT and Contact Centres</b>	<b>5</b>		30	40	50
Incident Management		20	30	40	50
Interpersonal and written communication	5	15	30	40	
Performance management			30	40	50
Remote support for products or services	10	20	30	40	50
Staff resource planning for Contact Centres			30	40	50
<b>Restricted option units:</b>					
Sector specific unit <sup>4</sup>	10	20	30	40	
Supporting learning and development (Import)			30	40	
Managing people and resources (Import)			30	40	50
Managing quality (Import)			30	40	50
Project Management (Import)				20	25
Use IT systems	5	15	25		
Use IT to exchange information	5	15	25		
General uses of IT	5	15	25		
Use IT software	5	15	25		
Internets and intranets	5	15	25		
Word processing software	10	20	30		
Spreadsheets software	10	20	35		
Database software	10	20	35		
Specialist or bespoke software	10	20	30		

<sup>4</sup> This can be an accredited unit from any suite of S/NVQs which is relevant to the candidate's job role. Availability of these units is at the discretion of the Awarding Bodies. In this context 'sector' means an occupational sector as defined by the Skills for Business Network. Management and Customer Service cannot be included.

### 3.3.2 Information Technology

AOC Title Units at each level will be differentiated by adding the level indicator as a suffix. (E.g. Customer Care 1, Customer Care 2 etc.)	Unit Values				
	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
Customer care	10	20	30	40	50
Data analysis and data structure design		15	25		
<b>Develop personal and organisational effectiveness</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>40</b>	
<b>Health and safety in ICT and Contact Centres</b>	<b>5</b>		30	40	50
Interpersonal and written communication	5	15	30	40	
Investigating and defining requirements		20	30	40	
Managing software development			30	40	50
Quality management of ICT products and services			30	40	50
Remote support for products or services	10	20	30	40	50
Security of ICT systems	5		30	40	50
Software development - component creation		20	30		
Software development - design		25	35	45	
Software installation and upgrade	10	20	30	40	
System management		15	30	40	55
System operation	10	20	30	40	
Technical advice and guidance	5	15	30	40	55
Technical fault diagnosis	10	20	30	40	
Technical fault remedy selection	5	15	25	35	
Testing ICT systems	10	20	30	40	
User profile administration		15	25	35	
Working with ICT hardware and equipment	10	20	30	40	
<b>Restricted option units:</b>					
Sector specific unit <sup>5</sup>	10	20	30	40	
Managing people and resources (Import)			30	40	50
Project management (Import)				20	25
Supporting learning and development (Import)			30	40	

<sup>5</sup> This can be an accredited unit from any suite of S/NVQs which is relevant to the candidate's job role. Availability of these units is at the discretion of the Awarding Bodies. In this context 'sector' means an occupational sector as defined by the Skills for Business Network. For example, Administration, Management and Customer Service cannot be included.

Internets and intranets	5	15	25		
E-mail	5	15	25		
Word processing software	10	20	30		
Spreadsheet software	10	20	35		
Database software	10	20	35		
Website software	10	20	35		
Artwork and imaging software	10	20	35		
Presentation software	10	20	30		

### 3.3.3 Communication Technology

AOC Title Units at each level will be differentiated by adding the level indicator as a suffix. (E.g. Customer Care 1, Customer Care 2 etc.)	Unit Values				
	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
Customer care	10	20	30	40	50
Data analysis and data structure design		15	25		
<b>Develop personal and organisational effectiveness</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>40</b>	
<b>Health and safety in ICT and Contact Centres</b>	<b>5</b>		30	40	50
Interpersonal and written communication	5	15	30	40	
Investigating and defining requirements		20	30	40	
Managing software development			30	40	50
Quality management of ICT products and services			30	40	50
Remote support for products or services	10	20	30	40	50
Security of ICT systems	5		30	40	50
Software development - component creation		20	30		
Software development - design		25	35	45	
Software installation and upgrade	10	20	30	40	
System management		15	30	40	55
System operation	10	20	30	40	
Technical advice and guidance	5	15	30	40	55
Technical fault diagnosis	10	20	30	40	
Technical fault remedy selection	5	15	25	35	
Testing ICT systems	10	20	30	40	
User profile administration		15	25	35	
Working with ICT hardware and equipment	10	20	30	40	
<b>Restricted option units:</b>					
Sector specific unit <sup>6</sup>	10	20	30	40	
Managing people and resources (Import)			30	40	50
Project management (Import)				20	25
Supporting learning and development (Import)			30	40	

<sup>6</sup> This can be an accredited unit from any suite of S/NVQs which is relevant to the candidate's job role. Availability of these units is at the discretion of the Awarding Bodies. In this context 'sector' means an occupational sector as defined by the Skills for Business Network. For example, Administration, Management and Customer Service cannot be included.

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		

#### 4. Importation of units

Wherever possible, existing units have been imported into the above qualification structures. This is the case for units covering:

- Learning and development;
- Management of people and resources;
- Quality management (CC only); and
- Project management.

However in some cases, after extensive consideration, it has been deemed appropriate to create new AOCs which overlap to an extent with existing standards units. These AOCs are as follows:

- Customer care;
- Health and safety; and
- Quality management (IT & CT only).

The principal reason for adopting this approach is the hierarchical approach we have used to define levels of responsibility and activities in the new standards. As a general rule each Area of Competence, in addition to the specifics of the particular area; is structured in the following way:

Level	Responsibility / Activities
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• setting strategy for the particular area</li> <li>• defining the scope and content of organisational procedures</li> </ul>
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• defining working practices, documentation etc. in line with strategy</li> <li>• implementing, and ensuring compliance with, organisational procedures</li> </ul>
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• implementing and following working practices</li> <li>• monitoring compliance with organisational procedures</li> </ul>
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• following relevant working practices</li> </ul>
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• following specified working practices</li> </ul>

It is an important part of this structure that a clear 'chain-of-command' has been established using standard terminology. In addition to these AOCs being of central importance to the sectors the procedures and processes defined at higher levels of these particular areas of competence are also used widely in other AOCs. Importation of existing units would have broken the chain and caused considerable difficulty in constructing a cohesive set of standards both in terms of content and presentation.

Other reasons for not importing units in these particular areas:

- the existing standards did not cover the full range of levels which we had identified as necessary;
- the existing standards did not provide full coverage of the knowledge or skills required by the sectors;
- the format of the new standards is so different from existing standards that re-formatting imported units would have been very difficult and could have been interpreted as a virtual re-write.

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