WCS
World Class Skills Programme
Developing Responsive Provision

LSIS
LEARNING AND SKILLS IMPROVEMENT SERVICE

Sector skills

The learner and assessment journey

Skills

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Foreword

The further education sector understands the need to improve skills levels if business is to compete and succeed in global markets. Further education providers recognise too the key role they have to play in innovation, training and support for employers. We are keen to learn from the many examples of effective practice in the sector to build provider capacity to deliver high quality, flexible provision that responds to employers' needs.

The Learning and Skills Improvement Service's (LSIS) World Class Skills programme (WCS) provides a range of products and services that are alert to the needs of individual providers as they seek to improve the responsiveness and quality of their offer to employers.

Fully funded, it provides a free-of-charge range of interactive workshops, seminars, consultancies and structured support to take forward reform and development through thematic development projects.

This publication is one of a group of resources that have been developed to support interactive workshops and seminars offered through the programme. We believe it brings together useful information to support providers as they gear up their business with and for employers.

Roger McClure
Chief Executive, LSIS

Welcome to World Class Skills

The *Leitch Review of Skills: Prosperity for all in the Global Economy, World Class Skills* (2006) investigated the UK's long-term skills needs and predicted that even if targets current at the time of the report were met, the UK's skills base would still lag behind many of its key comparators.

That's why the government has committed to ensuring that the workforce in England has world-class skills by 2020. This will call for an enormous shift in attitudes and aspirations within workplaces, schools, colleges, universities and society itself.

It will require every individual to think about updating their skills and qualifications to ensure that they are giving employers what they really need.

It will require employers to play an active role in helping to reform vocational qualifications to ensure that they are relevant and responsive to changes in the global economy.

In support of these reforms, the Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS), working closely with national partners, was asked by the government to lead the development of a single, integrated improvement strategy to support the drive for excellence in the further education system that would succeed in the new demand-led environment.

In the twenty-first century, our natural resource is our people – and their potential is both untapped and vast. Skills will unlock that potential. The prize for our country will be enormous – higher productivity, the creation of wealth and social justice.

Lord Leitch, *Leitch Review of Skills*, 2006

Introduction to the programme

The **World Class Skills – developing responsive provision** is an LSIS programme providing support for improvement activities for LSC-funded providers in enhancing their employer-facing provision. This will support organisations in developing provision to meet employers' skills needs and the aspirations of the *Leitch Review of Skills*.

KPMG and its consortium partners are delivering this major support programme. Together they can bring significant expertise to you and your organisation. KPMG has an in-depth understanding of the wider education and skills sector that can help further education colleges and independent training providers deliver improved outcomes for learners and employees, as well as achieve their organisational goals. They can also draw in the sector's most innovative and effective practice to share with you.

Programme benefits

Involvement in the programme will help LSC-funded providers of education and training to:

- develop and extend effective employer relationships
- ensure that growth and quality go hand in hand
- create fit-for-purpose organisational structures
- gain relevant accreditation, for example, Training Quality Standard (TQS) and Framework for Excellence
- access high-level support through a range of focused events
- network with peers and share effective practice.

Programme overview

The programme is designed to support the Train to Gain Plan for Growth, the changes to demand-led funding, the rolling out of the TQS accreditation, National Skills Academies and the development of specialist networks.

The focus of the programme is to work with providers and other stakeholders to be more responsive to the needs of employers and increase the capacity of the FE system to provide high quality, flexible training and support for employers and their employees in order that they can contribute to UK productivity and competitiveness in a global economy.

The programme comprises both seminars and workshops. Seminars provide a high-level introduction and overview of the topic. Workshops are designed for smaller groups: the sessions are more interactive and practical in nature, giving participants the opportunity to work with a range of proven tools and techniques. There will be an opportunity for providers to apply for individualised consultancy support to work within their organisation in an intensive way to focus on the development of employer-responsive provision.

Resources

HMSO (Her Majesty's Stationery Office) (2007) *World Class Skills: Implementing the Leitch Review of Skills in England*. Norwich: HMSO. Available online at: www.dcsf.gov.uk/skillsstrategy/uploads/documents/World%20Class%20Skills%20FINAL.pdf

Lord Leitch (2006) *Leitch Review of Skills: Prosperity for all in the Global Economy, World Class Skills*. London: HMSO. Available online at: www.dcsf.gov.uk/furthereducation/uploads/documents/2006-12%20LeitchReview1.pdf

QIA (Quality Improvement Agency) (2006) *Pursuing Excellence: An Outline Improvement Strategy for Consultation*. Coventry: QIA.

Learning and Skills Council: www.lsc.gov.uk
Learning and Skills Improvement Service: www.lsis.org.uk
World Class Skills: www.excellencegateway.org.uk/wcs

Consultancy

As part of the World Class Skills programme, there are a limited number of one-to-one consultancies available. Consultancy support may allow your organisation to explore in greater depth some of the issues you have identified in attending a seminar or workshop. For example, having attended the workshop on 'Building employer-responsive skills in your organisation' and the seminar on 'Legal advice on employment terms and conditions' you may feel that your organisation would benefit from individual support in reviewing current and future staffing profiles and how to ensure these are aligned to increase employer-responsive provision.

This consultancy support is fully subsidised by LSIS. It is a unique opportunity to gain professional consultancy to support organisational development in enhancing your employer-responsive provision. It will, of course, also require time commitment from staff in your organisation in order to bring about real change and development for the organisation. In order for these benefits to be maximised it is essential that this consultancy is supported from the top, both conceptually and with commitment and input to the process from the head of the organisation. Other members of the senior management team will also need to engage with the consultancy process, depending on the nature of this consultancy.

For each consultancy, a KPMG consultant will be assigned to your organisation to support you through the process of completing the diagnostic questionnaire and associated development plan, *A Framework to Measure and Improve Employer Responsiveness*. This development plan will be confidential to your organisation. If you have already completed this diagnostic questionnaire they will support you in updating this and validating its currency. They will then work with you to identify how additional consultancy support may help you to progress in implementing your development plan. They will take a flexible approach to ensure that this consultancy plan is customised to meet your needs but, as an indication, it may cover areas such as implementing effective labour market information (LMI) and/or customer relationship management (CRM) systems; organisational design for performance; implementing and maintaining change; or achieving the Training Quality Standard.

If you would like further information please contact
wcsenquiries@kpmg.co.uk

E-learning

Alongside the workshops and seminars, a suite of five online training modules is being developed. The topics are as follows:

- Building employer-responsive skills in your organisation
- Funding and finance for maximising business
- Identifying bottom-line benefits
- Sales and gaining repeat business
- Targeting SMEs for training.

E-learning is an alternative way for providers to interact with the programme and share knowledge within their organisation.

Each module will take between 40 minutes and an hour to complete, and will include interactive material such as multiple-choice questions, quizzes, games, scenarios and case studies.

The modules will be accessed from www.excellencegateway.org.uk/wcs

If you would like further information please contact

Adam Caldwell
adam.caldwell@kpmg.co.uk

Agenda

Coffee and registration	**09.30**
Welcome and introductions	**10.00**
Aims and objectives of the workshop	**10.10**
What is assessment all about?	**10.20**
Quotation from Steve Anwyll: discussion	**10.40**
Overview of the learning journey	**10.45**
Initial and diagnostic assessment	**11.05**
Break	**11.25**
What are the key challenges to assessment when working with employers?	**11.35**
Raising awareness with the hard to convince employer	**12.15**
Lunch	**12.30**
Ice breaker: follow-on maths cards	**13.00**
Demonstration of Target Skills and Tools Library	**13.30**
Feedback (video/DVD)	**13.45**
Card sort activity	**14.05**
Carrying out a diagnostic assessment	**14.30**
Break	**14.55**
Individual learning plans	**15.05**
Summative assessments	**15.30**
Closing session	**15.45**

Workshop outline

Aim

To raise awareness of the different approaches to, and methods of, assessment within the employer responsive learning journey.

Objectives

- To improve practice in all aspects of the assessment process.
- To demonstrate a range of assessment tools to include specifics around Skills for Life.
- To explore key components of effective assessment.
- To understand how your management of the learner journey impacts on your organisation's employer success rate.
- To reflect upon your own practice.

By the end of the workshop, participants will:

- Have a better understanding of the learner journey and its implications for the organisation.
- Have a learner-centred approach to assessment.
- Have a whole organisation approach to assessment.
- Know how to identify the key features of assessment of, and for, learning.
- Know how to action plan for future improvements, reflective practice and continuing professional development (CPD) opportunities.

Benefits

- The development of a person-centred approach to assessment within the learner journey.
- An understanding of how a Whole Organisation Approach can lead to better learner retention and achievement.
- A wider knowledge of the range of assessment tools and materials which are currently available.

What is assessment all about?

In the course of this section we will be asking just what makes assessment effective and robust.

Exercise

Consider the following questions:

- How is assessment structured in your organisation?
- What do you do with the information?

Under the following headings note which assessment tools you would use at each stage:

Screening

Initial assessment

Diagnostic assessment

Assessment and training

In a recent article in the *Times Educational Supplement* (25 April 2008), Steve Anwyll, of the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority's curriculum division and a former head of the national literacy strategy, was quoted as saying:

> You cannot separate assessment from teaching and learning: you cannot be an effective trainer/teacher if you are not assessing.

Exercise

Do you agree with this quote? Is there such a link between assessment and training in your organisation?

Case study: Nick Training performance

Starts
Nick Training has an annual starts allocation of 200. At the third quarter they have delivered 105 starts which is 53 per cent of their annual allocation and 17 per cent below the quarterly milestone of 70 per cent. They are in the red performance category.

Achievements
At the third quarter they have delivered 11 achievements which is 10 per cent of their starts delivery (105 starts) and 20 per cent below the quarterly milestone of 30 per cent. They are in the red performance category.

Success rate
The company's success rate is 70 per cent which they are very happy about as it exceeds the quarterly milestone of 60 per cent. They are in the green performance category.

Overall performance
Although Nick Training has met the success rate milestone for the third quarter, their starts and achievement performance are outside 15 per cent of the quarterly milestones and therefore they are in the red performance category.

There is, therefore, a recommendation that their contract is reduced to reflect their actual rate of delivery.

The following equation and examples show how, within the Minimum Levels of Performance, weighted success rates are calculated. The rates are weighted because they are looking at the expected guided learning hours (glh).

$$\frac{\text{Sum of expected glh where the learning aim was achieved}}{\text{(sum of expected glh for all learning aims)} - \text{(sum of expected glh of learning aims transferred out)}} \times 100$$

Example: a programme with 10 learners enrolled doing 30 glhs and they all achieve:

$$\frac{(30 \times 10) = 300 \text{ glh}}{300 - 0 = 300 \text{ glh}} \times 100 = 100\%$$

Example: the same programme only has seven achievements:

$$\frac{(30 \times 7) = 210 \text{ glh}}{300 - 0 = 300 \text{ glh}} \times 100 = 70\%$$

Example: the same programme has two learners who have transferred out to another course with six achievements:

$$\frac{(30 \times 6) = 180 \text{ glh}}{(30 \times 10) - (30 \times 2) = 240 \text{ glh}} \times 100 = 75\%$$

Notes

Notes

What do employers want from provision and providers?

There is a lot of literature on what employers want but, interestingly, less presented through the voice of the employer. Our findings here are based on both bespoke and external research.

For large employers in June 2008 KPMG conducted phone interviews with 15 large organisations with 5,000 or more employees and asked them what they looked for in a provider.

In August 2006 the Centre for Enterprise (CFE) carried out research in small and medium enterprises with between five and 50 employees.

Other research we have drawn on:

- DfES/Ecotec Research, March 2005, surveys and interviews with 135 work-based learning providers
- QIA (now Learning and Skills Improvement Service), 2006 – on implementing Train to Gain
- Learning and Skills Development Agency – *Successful Engagement: Guidance for College and Providers on Effective Engagement in Post-16 Learning* (Hughes, 2003).

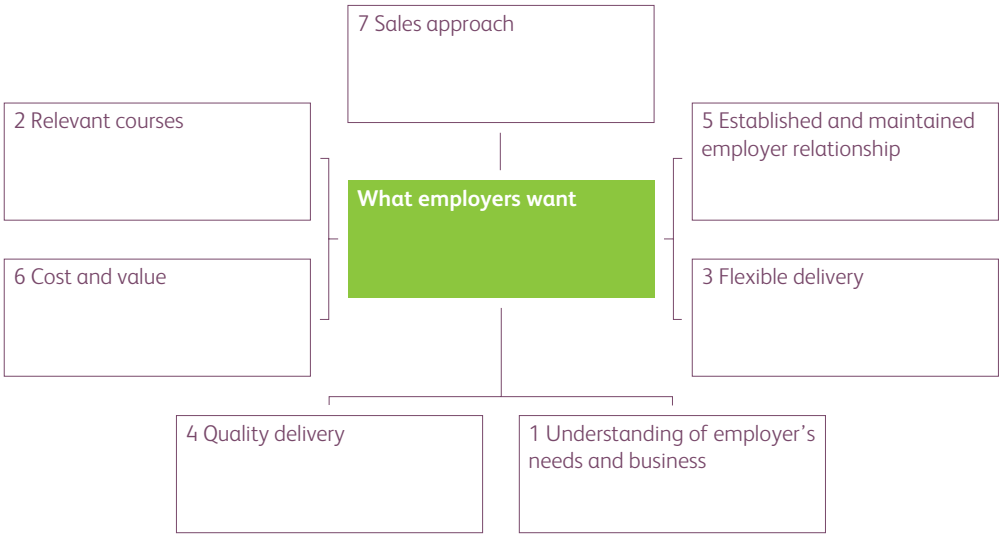
The following diagrams show the results for, respectively, large employers and small and medium enterprises.

Resources

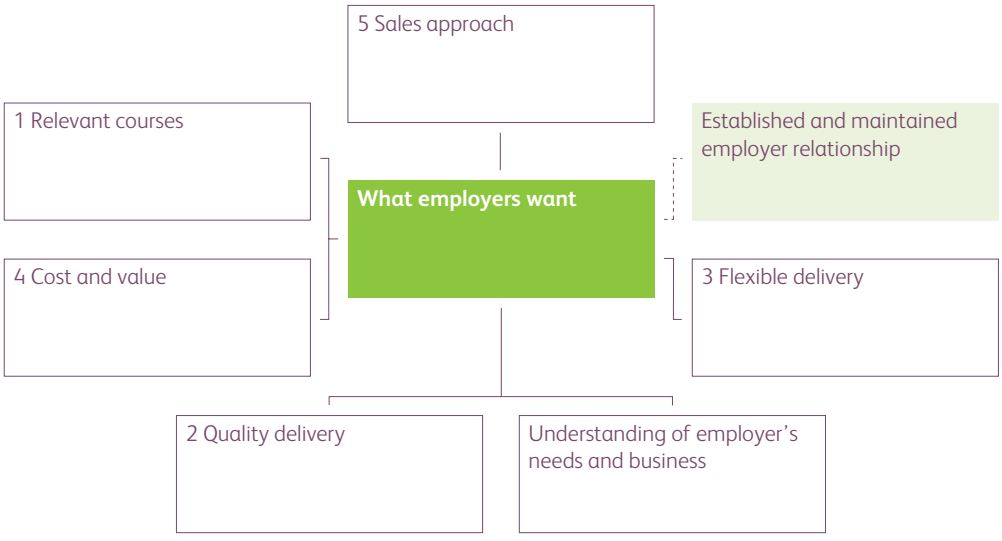
Hughes, M. (2003) *Successful Engagement: Guidance for Colleges and Providers on Effective Engagement in Post-16 Learning*. London: Learning and Skills Development Agency. Available online at: www.lsda.org.uk/files/pdf/1530.pdf.

QIA (2006) *Implementing Train to Gain: An Introduction*. Coventry: QIA. Available online at: www.qia.org.uk/programmesandservices/uploads/Implementing_Train_to_Gain-An_Introduction.pdf

What do employers want – large employers (5,000+)

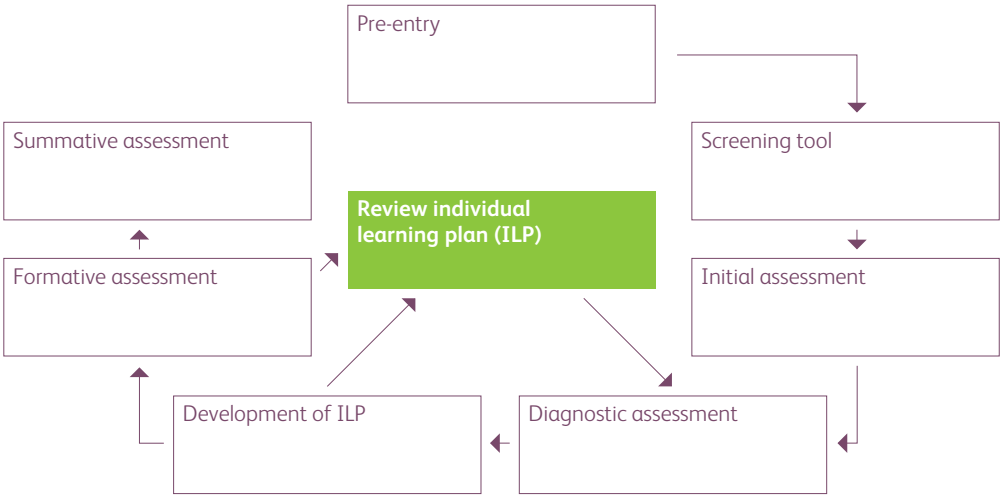


What do employers want – SMEs



The learner journey: an overview

The following diagram charts the basic stages of the learner journey.



Screening tool (Skills Check)

These tools are used by most providers and normally carried out at the information, advice and guidance (IAG) stage to establish if there is a possibility of a need.

Some providers will take previous qualifications as proxies, such as a GCSE in English. (However note that even with a grade A–C someone could have a skills need at Level 2 or 3 with spelling, grammar and punctuation, as the GCSE exam allocates only about 5–10 per cent of the marks to this.)

Screening may be done as part of an initial interview. At this stage short literacy and numeracy tasks (taking about 10 minutes) are often included.

Most frequently used as a good screening tool is the Basic Skills Agencies Fast Track, which consists of 20 questions and a form filling exercise. There are alternatives available, for example, from the Department of Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS) (eg Smart Move) and the Quality Improvement Agency (QIA). The ability of trainees is also assessed through the interview itself and the application form.

If a need is identified, a more detailed assessment by a Skills for Life professional should be carried out.

Initial assessment (IA)

This stage begins the detailed diagnostic assessment of individual employees' needs. It is where the process of identifying abilities, aspirations and needs starts. This assessment will inform the selection of the right learning programme. It will most likely include an IA tool to identify literacy, language or numeracy needs. This will indicate at what level someone should start a programme and would normally take between 20 and 40 minutes for each area.

Diagnostic assessment (DA)

This involves a more detailed assessment of specific skills and will include a tool to assess literacy, language or numeracy. The results of this assessment will inform teaching and learning styles. This process is ongoing and continues throughout a programme of learning.

Development of the individual learning plan (ILP)

At this stage we are developing provision to meet the needs of the learner. An ILP is built up of a number of different elements, the main ones being the IA and DA assessment results, and will include long- and short-term aims. The ILP will also track the individual's progress, what they have learnt and what they want to learn. The key to success here is that the learner has full ownership of the plan.

Formative assessment

At this stage we are assessing progress and evaluating the delivery of learning. This should be recorded as part of the ILP and is clearly an ongoing process. There may be a need for further diagnostic assessment during this process.

Summative assessment

This is the end stage and includes final assessment and certification of learning.

Resources

Department for Innovation, Universities & Skills (DIUS):
www.dcsf.gov.uk/readwriteplus/Diagnostic_Materials_main

Tools library: http://excellence.qia.org.uk/toolslibrary

Exercise

Think about the stages of learning employed in your own organisation. How do they compare to this model?

We will now take a closer look at initial and diagnostic assessment.

Initial and diagnostic assessment

Screening

These tools, used by providers and employers and normally carried out at IAG or interview stage, are part of a very basic fact finding exercise. They could include some questions relating to literacy and numeracy.

Adults who have problems with literacy, numeracy and/or language are not usually open about the fact. During the first meeting you may become aware of signs that a person could have literacy, numeracy or language needs.

These signs can include:

- Saying they can't read today because they've forgotten their glasses
- Bringing along 'distractions', eg children, a dog, a mobile phone which keeps ringing
- Being too rushed to complete forms and wanting to take them away
- Bringing along a friend/partner/parent because, 'S/he always deals with that sort of thing'
- Asking where to sign or signing without reading
- Appearing to be very evasive or distracted when asked about skills/education
- Wanting to only apply for jobs or courses where no form is needed
- Arriving late or missing appointments
- Being unsure about time. How long ago? For how long?

These may be signs which indicate possible literacy, numeracy or language needs, but remember too that some 'excuses' may be genuine – for example, they actually can read, but have just forgotten their glasses!

Tools

Set out below are some of the most frequently used screening tools.

Building Essential Skills

This is an example of a number of assessment tools which screen in a technical/vocational area. There is a danger with such contextualised tools that they may be more effective in providing coping strategies to hide a SfL need. These tools will assess literacy and numeracy in the work context rather than the actual functional skills.

Building Essential Skills (CTAD): www.buildingessentialskills.co.uk

Basic Skills Screener

This is a quick test which shows if a learner is competent at Level 2 and is ideal to use with groups of learners. All results can be collated using a customised management data tool. It meets the requirements for the initial identification of basic skills needs. There are 10 different literacy and numeracy assessments with 96 literacy questions and 120 different numeracy questions.

Basic Skills Screener (CTAD): www.ctad.co.uk/content/view/105/195/

Fast Track

This tool consists of 20 questions and two sections around completing a form. It will only give you an indication of a need and is by no means foolproof.

Fast Track (BSA): www.dcsf.gov.uk/readwriteplus/LearningInfrastructureScreening

The Test Factory

This tool allows you to select a range of questions which suits your needs and subject area. It is most often used by employers rather than providers.

The Test Factory: www.thetestfactory.com

Smart Move – Skills Check tools

The Skills Check tools are designed to assess whether an individual has a literacy or numeracy need and to identify learners who would benefit from a more in-depth initial assessment. The Skills Check tools help to determine a potential need; they are not designed to indicate the specific level of the learner.

Smart Move (DIUS): www.toolslibrary.co.uk/workplace

BKSB

This tool identifies if there is a need and is adaptive to the answers you give.

BKSB (WNC): www.bksb.co.uk

Initial assessment

The purpose of initial assessment is to:

- get a starting level
- identify a need
- acknowledge prior attainment
- determine what support needs are required.

At this stage the assessment will establish the prior attainment of each learner (their qualifications and experience, particularly those which are relevant to the qualification/programme).

You also need to determine here what your learners should achieve *as a minimum* by the end of their programme? To meet these objectives, what additional support needs do they have and how can you meet them? What underpinning skills do they require, including communication, literacy, numeracy and language skills.

If you are dealing with work-based learners, you need to consider whether their job roles match their learning and assessment requirements, and what are their employers' expectations?

Other questions to think about include:
- What are the needs of other stakeholders, partners, funding bodies and referral agencies?
- What are the awarding body's expectations?
- What are the needs of the skills sector?
- Are there specific legal requirements (eg child protection screening)?
- Are there any equality and diversity issues?
- Learners' learning styles and personal characteristics – if you assess these, how do you intend to use this information?

Tools
Set out below are some of the most frequently used initial assessment tools.

Target Skills
Target Skills is the UK's bestselling suite of ICT-based Skills for Life materials. It delivers highly effective learning to adults, integrating sophisticated initial assessment tools, a web-based management system, and content-rich modules – all mapped precisely to the core curricula.

Target Skills has been developed and refined over the past five years in use, and its content and modules are constantly evolving. If you are looking to teach Skills for Life at any level in any environment, Target Skills provides you with highly effective, versatile, blended adult learning.

Target Skills (CTAD): www.targetskills.net

Tools Library (DIUS)
The tools here have been designed with different audiences in mind:
- Standard – for general purpose use in a range of contexts
- Workplace – for basic workplace usage (ie non sector-specific workplace)

- Contextualised – for specific workplace usage (ie sector-specific workplace)
- Asset Skills – working with the cleaning industry. This tool has been designed for people working in the cleaning sector and should be used with learners currently working in this sector or who have had recent experience of working in the sector.
- Road Passenger Transport Industries – This tool has been designed for people working in road passenger transport and should be used with learners currently working in the sector or who have had recent experience of working in the sector.
- Skills for Health – This tool has been designed specifically for Health Care Assistants working in a variety of health care settings.
- Skillsmart Retail – This tool has been designed for people working in the retail sector and should be used with learners currently working in the sector or who have had recent experience in this sector.
- Initial assessment tools (literacy and numeracy) – The initial assessment tools are designed to help learners and their teachers ascertain the approximate general literacy or numeracy skills level at which the learner is working and, therefore, if further diagnostic assessment or skills support might be appropriate. However, it should be stressed that the tool is not designed to be a diagnostic tool. The outcome will tell the learner whether s/he is working at one of five adult core curriculum levels from entry 1 to Level 2 and will feed into the diagnostic assessment process.

The Skills Check tools and initial assessment tools for literacy and numeracy are available in both paper-based and computer-based formats.

Tools library (DIUS): www.toolslibrary.co.uk/workplace

BKSB

Interactive initial assessment (including screening): Literacy & Numeracy, is a fully interactive and self-marking assessment that gives a clear indication of a learner's current literacy and numeracy levels. This assessment is suitable for all learners and is specified to National Standards for basic and key skills.

Other features of this system are:

- BKSB screening is included (there's no need to use a separate screening tool).
- One assessment is suitable for all learners.
- The assessment is referenced to the adult core curriculum for both literacy and numeracy.
- It gives a clear indication of current literacy and numeracy levels and predicts possible achievement.
- Dyslexia and dyscalculia signifiers are included.
- The learner's level from pre-entry to key skills 3 for literacy and numeracy is indicated.

- It signposts subsequent in-depth diagnostic assessments to be taken.
- There is an optional voice-over and an option to remove illustrations for easy reading.

BKSB (WNC): www.bksb.co.uk

Thomas Skills

Skills Online is a series of over 100 online aptitude tests that measure hard competences such as MS Office, call centre listening and keying, keyboard and secretarial skills as well as literacy and numeracy. Skills Online is a fast and accurate series of tests that are an effective predictor of performance skills competence.

Aptitude tests include the online skills training module. This module enables candidates to learn new skills where a training need has been identified. The skills training, like the tests, is delivered in real time, is interactive and specially designed for ease of understanding and navigation.

Skills training brings people up to speed in areas they need help with and aptitude testing can help you recruit and train people more effectively.

Thomas Skills: www.thomasinternational.net

Diagnostic assessment

This comprises a particularly detailed assessment of specific skills and will inform the teaching and learning styles used. The process is ongoing and continues throughout a programme of learning and/or assessment.

Diagnostic assessment:

- helps to identify specific learner strengths and needs
- determines learning targets, appropriate teaching and learning strategies
- usually happens at the beginning of a learning programme and then subsequently as the need arises.

Tools

Set out below are some of the most frequently used diagnostic assessment tools.

Target Skills Gold

This is a fully online learning tool which records and provides feedback throughout. Many of the large multi-site employers have opted for this type of package, although in an e-learning, and especially a Skills for Life, context it has its drawbacks.

Target Skills GOLD (CTAD): www.ctad.co.uk/content/view/245/302/

DIUS – diagnostic assessment
These are very good tools but a limited amount of people are trained in using them.

DIUS – diagnostic assessment:
www.dcsf.gov.uk/readwriteplus/Assessment_Materials

BKSB (WNC)
Fully interactive and self-marking, these assessments produce results which highlight skill gaps and signpost to relevant resources.

These tools cover English and mathematics from entry 3 to Level 3 and are specified to national standards and referenced to the adult core curriculum for both literacy and numeracy.

BKSB (WNC):
www.forskills.co.uk/index.php?page=bksbOnline_
www.bksb.co.uk

For further information on resources, publications and websites, see the Appendices.

Notes

The key challenges to assessment when working with employers

Choosing the correct delivery method to suit the employer's needs is vital to long-term success. Possible delivery methods therefore have to be assessed very carefully themselves to make sure they fit the requirements of the employer.

The assessment/delivery tree

Exercise

Using the symbolism of a tree of knowledge, draw your own tree to illustrate your proposed assessment process. Pick one of the delivery models and put this in the trunk of your tree. The roots will be the potential barriers for this model (eg lost working hours, limited IT access, etc), the branches will be the impact of the barriers (unable to deliver effectively, poor inspection results, etc). The fruit on the tree will represent possible solutions to support the delivery model (eg IT investment, more emphasis on pre-planning, etc)

Notes

Communication and raising awareness

It is crucial that employers are made aware of the need for a well trained and motivated workforce – especially in the current highly competitive and globalised marketplace.

It is estimated that 12 million people in the UK workforce lack functional literacy and numeracy. These low level skills cost the UK economy up to £10 billion a year. If you are a company employing 51–100 employees, poor literacy and numeracy skills could be costing you £86,000 per year. If your organisation employs 1,000 or more employees, then the cost of poor literacy and numeracy skills could be as high as £500,000 per year.

And, furthermore, the problem is not going away. According to the 2008 GCSE results: 43.7 per cent of school leavers left school without A*–C grade maths and 37.1 per cent of school leavers left school without A*–C grade English.

In this context it is vital that FE providers make sure they are in a position to develop strong links with local and national employers and communicate effectively about the importance of assessment and the range of learner options available.

If, for instance, employers have a lack of understanding of initial and diagnostic assessment and the differences between them, you could deliver a workshop highlighting the learner journey to the human resources/training division.

It is very important that you gain the cooperation of all involved and that you act professionally to win their trust and develop a good reputation through quality work.

If previous experience of assessment has been negative, or time consuming, this could then become a barrier. In this case, avoid working in too much depth, or taking too long to complete the analysis. Provide guidance and examples of assessments and the results they can achieve, as well as giving a timeline for completion.

Be aware of employment laws concerning age, disability and gender; and possible implications for the data you collect.

- Does the data you collect adhere to employment laws, rules and data protection?
- Have you taken into account any Special Needs – eg made provision for those with visual impairment, hearing difficulty, dyslexia, etc?

Initial assessment: giving feedback

Providing sensitive and constructive feedback is a fundamental part of developing a successful learner journey – especially within the context of a person-centred approach. Some of the key issues to consider are:

- Putting learners at ease
- Listening sensitively
- Being prepared
- Allowing plenty of time
- Reading body language
- Building confidence
- Ensuring that the learner understands and is happy with the next steps.

Finally, you should also consider what quality assurance processes you have in place. Would you consider putting in place a quality assurance process for initial assessment?

Notes

Carrying out a diagnostic assessment

Diagnostic assessment uses the results from the initial assessment as its starting point. Each assessment can take up to an hour and needs to be undertaken by a skilled practitioner.

It is important that the context as well as and the feedback scheme and categories are explained to the learner. Generally, learner strengths and areas for development are graded as: emerging, consolidating and established.

For a successful outcome, the learner should be involved as much as possible at every stage. The process should hinge around a person-centred relationship as far as possible and be regarded as something that the assessor/provider does *with* rather than *to* the learner.

Examples of diagnostic assessment and candidate reports can be found in the Appendices.

Successful assessment then leads to ILP development and implementation.

Notes

Individual learning plans

The following quotes from Ofsted reports illustrate a range of findings in relation to the quality of provision found in a variety of providers.

On assessment processes:

> Arrangements for initial assessment are generally adequate. However, the quality and availability of literacy, numeracy and language support are poor.
>
> In one case study in our evidence both the employer and the learner felt short changed because too easy a route of assessment and qualification was chosen.
>
> However, there has not been sufficient analysis of the skills which employers need, nor has enough information been gathered on existing staff skills, future business needs or the potential for accrediting prior learning.
>
> The quality and availability of literacy and numeracy support for those on work-based learning programmes remained too variable, although providers showed increased awareness of their responsibility to identify and meet such needs.
>
> Employers tended to direct learners towards the quickest routes to a qualification, selecting optional units which required the minimum amount of new learning, rather than encouraging learners to undertake more challenging and ultimately more beneficial options.

On assessment:

> Assessment is well organised, with rigorous internal verification. This increasingly supports achievement, especially for work-based learners.
>
> Assessment in work-based learning is well planned with a good variety of evidence and clear recording.
>
> Insufficient initial assessment of learners' literacy, numeracy and language support needs.
>
> Insufficient initial assessment for some learners.

Good assessment practice and progress monitoring.

Poor practice in some assessments.

Particularly effective initial advice and guidance.

Sources: Quotes taken from Oftsed Chief Inspector's summary on work-based learning, and from Oftsed reports from a variety of institutions (see: www.ofsted.gov.uk).

From their inspection evidence Ofsted have developed this summary of the essential components of good practice in colleges:

- Effective use of ILPS
- Skilful questioning to check understanding
- Constructive and positive written and verbal feedback
- Clear, specific targets
- Recording of learning rather than activities
- Students' awareness of their targets
- Regular review of the ILP with the student

Source: Ofsted Chief Inspector Summary 2007/08

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Ofsted thus reinforces the importance of constructing clear ILPs incorporating specific learning goals and targets which are understood and accepted by the learner and reviewed thoroughly throughout the learning journey.

According to the Skills for Life programme, learners can use ILPs to:

- take ownership of their own learning
- recognise the value of prior experiences
- make sense of new experiences and understand how they learn
- plan to practise skills and gain confidence by applying them in a range of different contexts, such as the workplace, at home or in the community
- identify and understand barriers to learning and where they can find support to remove them
- measure their own success.

Trainers/tutors/staff can use ILPs to:

- listen to learners' voices, review performance and respond to learners' needs
- integrate processes around the learner: initial and diagnostic assessment, action planning, learner contracts, additional support needs, tutorial records, learner performance, progression options and exit information
- match teaching and learning to learners' strengths and needs, and ensure that learners are on the right programmes and achieving according to expectations
- plan opportunities for learners to extend their learning into contexts such as the workplace, community or leisure activities
- plan opportunities for progression to further learning.

Managers can use ILPs to:

- make efficient use of core processes
- evaluate learners' responses to new teaching and learning approaches
- support consistent standards and sustainable improvement
- record RARPA (Recognition and Recording of Progress and Achievement) process
- monitor the quality of provision and provide data for impact measures.

Source: *Guidance for Assessment and Learning – Individual Learning Plans*. (www.sflip.org.uk)

Two examples of ILP forms used in practice can be found in Appendix 3.

In essence, for learners, ILPs record what they want to achieve on their learning journey – their goals and progression options.

Learners will use their ILPs to negotiate and plan *exactly* what they are going to do, how and when. For the learner journey to be successful, therefore, the targets contained in the plan need to be SMART – ie specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, time-bound.

When writing SMART targets, make sure you provide:

- a clear outcome – eg will be able to …use/read/multiply
- a clear range – eg capital letters for people's names/front page of newspaper/amounts of money by a single digit figure
- a clear situation – eg for family members/to summarise news/to calculate travel costs for a week.

Examples:

- I will be able to use capital letters for people's names for family members.
- I will be able to read the front page of the *Chronicle* to summarise the news.
- I will be able to multiply amounts of money by a single digit figure to calculate travel costs for a week.

The ILP will, therefore include:

- learning targets with outcomes and timescales, and details of how success will be determined (success criteria)
- details of the resources, support and guidance the learner will use
- details of where and how the learning will take place.

Resource

Guidance for Assessment and Learning – Individual Learning Plans. Coventry: QIA. Available online at: www.skillsforlife-sw.org.uk/docs/Individual%20Learning%20Plans.pdf

Learners should be supported …in order to get the most from their programme and to take responsibility for managing their own learning. In short, we want all students to become 'expert learners'. We know that knowing how to learn has a positive impact on retention, achievement and a learner's attitude to learning.

Department for Education and Skills (2006)

Summative assessment

The summative assessment marks the end of the learner journey, or at least of a specific stage of that journey. At this point, the goals and targets are reviewed for final assessment and certification of learning.

It may well be that the end of one learning path leads to new possibilities for further routes to learning, and that recommendations may be made for further assessment and programmes of learning.

The Move On programme, for instance, commissioned by the Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS) offers a positive approach to improving English and maths skills. Highlighting opportunity for all rather than need for some, the focus is on gaining qualifications and progressing rather than on people's problems and needs.

Finally, then, it is important to remember that in a person-centred environment it is crucial that the summative assessment be positive in its overall tone and outlook. The learning journey is, after all cyclical and the summative assessment should relate back to the journey so far and forward to an improved future.

Resource

Move On: www.move-on.org.uk

Plan of action

What are the top three actions I need to carry out back in the organisation?

What are the timescales I need to set myself?

What resources do I need to support me in these actions?

How will I measure the success of these actions?

Contacts

Name

Job title

Organisation

Email

Telephone

Name

Job title

Organisation

Email

Telephone

Name

Job title

Organisation

Email

Telephone

Name

Job title

Organisation

Email

Telephone

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Resources

Publications

DfES (Department for Education and Skills) (2006) *Further Education: Raising Skills, Improving Life Chances*. Cm 6768. Norwich: TSO. Available online at: www.official-documents.gov.uk/document/cm67/6768/6768.pdf

HMSO (Her Majesty's Stationery Office) (2007) *World Class Skills: Implementing the Leitch Review of Skills in England*. Norwich: HMSO. Available online at: www.dcsf.gov.uk/skillsstrategy/uploads/documents/World%20Class%20Skills%20FINAL.pdf

Hughes, M. (2003) *Successful Engagement: Guidance for Colleges and Providers on Effective Engagement in Post-16 Learning*. London: Learning and Skills Development Agency. Available online at: www.lsda.org.uk/files/pdf/1530.pdf

Lord Leitch (2006) *Leitch Review of Skills: Prosperity for all in the Global Economy, World Class Skills*. London: HMSO. Available online at: www.dcsf.gov.uk/furthereducation/uploads/documents/2006-12%20LeitchReview1.pdf

QIA (Quality Improvement Agency, now called LSIS) (2006) *Implementing Train to Gain: An Introduction*. Coventry: QIA. Available online at: www.qia.org.uk/programmesandservices/uploads/Implementing_Train_to_Gain-An_Introduction.pdf

QIA (2008) *Guidance for Assessment and Learning – Individual Learning Plans*. Coventry: QIA. Available online at: www.skillsforlife-sw.org.uk/docs/Individual%20Learning%20Plans.pdf

Times Educational Supplement, 25 April 2008.

Websites

bksb excellence in skills development: www.bksb.co.uk
Consign Construction Skills Solutions: www.buildingessentialskills.co.uk
Department for Children, Schools and Families: www.dcsf.gov.uk
ForSkills: www.forskills.co.uk
Learning and Skills Council: www.lsc.gov.uk
Learning and Skills Improvement Service: www.lsis.org.uk
Move On: www.move-on.org.uk
Target Skills: www.targetskills.net
Test Factory: www.thetestfactory.com
Thomas business assessment tools: www.thomasinternational.net
Tools library: http://excellence.qia.org.uk/toolslibrary
Tools Library: www.toolslibrary.co.uk
The Training Quality Standard: www.trainingqualitystandard.co.uk
Train to Gain: www.traintogain.gov.uk
Tribal: www.ctad.co.uk
World Class Skills: www.excellencegateway.org.uk/wcs

For further information on resources, publications and websites, see the Appendices (page 48).

Courses

Visit the World Class Skills website for listings of all seminars and workshops within the programme: www.excellencegateway.org.uk/wcs

Courses that may be of special interest are:

- Assessing your level of responsiveness
- Building employer-responsive skills in your organisation
- Delivering effective information, advice and guidance
- Developing your vision for employer responsiveness
- Effective information, advice and guidance
- Employer engagement strategy and the Skills Broker standard
- Engaging employers through the achievement of the Skills Broker Standard
- Engaging the whole organisation
- Identifying bottom-line benefits
- Identifying key skills and behaviours for engaging employers
- Undertaking effective organisational and training needs analyses.

PDFs of all the courses are available to download.

E-learning

Visit the World Class Skills website for all e-learning courses within the programme: www.excellencegateway.org.uk/wcs

Courses that may be of special interest are:

- Building employer-responsive skills in your organisation
- Funding and finance for maximising business
- Identifying bottom-line benefits
- Targeting SMEs for training.

Appendices

Diagnostic assessment – assessor report **44**
Diagnostic assessment – candidate report **47**
Resources, publications and websites **48**

Diagnostic assessment – assessor report

Assessment report: assessor

Candidate name:	Ann Smith
Candidate reference:	AS Num
Assessment:	First Assessment
Group:	Sept 2006
Assessor:	Administrator
Centre:	
Date started:	15/09/2006 11:01
Date completed:	15/09/2006 12:12

Task number:	1
Task description:	Task 1: Whole numbers
Subject:	Numeracy
Curriculum area:	Number
Level:	Entry 3
Curriculum reference(s):	N1/E3.1, N1/E3.7
Curriculum element(s):	Understand numbers up to 1000, including numbers as words, number sequences and approximation by rounding

Diagnostic scheme

Item number:	2
Score:	1
Objective/item description:	Translate numbers written in words into number in digits
Correct answer:	502
Candidate answer:	502

Item number:	3
Score:	1
Objective/item description:	Understand sequence of ascending numbers in steps of tens
Correct answer:	46
Candidate answer:	46

Item number:	4
Score:	1
Objective/item description:	Understand sequence of decending numbers in steps of hundreds
Correct answer:	250
Candidate answer:	250

Item number:	5
Score:	1
Objective/item description:	Translate amounts of money written in words into numbers
Correct answer:	£125.30
Candidate answer:	125.30

Item number:	6
Score:	0
Objective/item description:	Know odd and even numbers
Correct answer:	34
Candidate answer:	Incorrect – 77

Item number:	7
Score:	1
Objective/item description:	Understand odd and even, left and right from written text
Correct answer:	Left
Candidate answer:	Left

Item number:	8
Score:	1
Objective/item description:	Recognise a number written in words and that the position of the digit affects its value
Correct answer:	875
Candidate answer:	875

Item number:	38
Score:	1
Objective/item description:	Round a number up or down to the nearest hundred
Correct answer:	800
Candidate answer:	800

Total Task Score:	7
Interpretation:	The learner is given a series of problems related to understanding numbers up to 1000, including words in numbers, number sequences, odd and even numbers and understanding of approximation by rounding.
Skills diagnosis established:	**Candidate profile information** Skills in this task appear to be sound.
	Next steps Check these skills at Level 1, as the learner may have a higher level of skill. If one or two errors have been made in this task, check that the learner understands the particular skill assessed in the question.

Diagnostic assessment – candidate report

Task number:	1
Task description:	Task 1: Whole numbers
Subject:	Numeracy
Curriculum area:	Number
Level:	Entry 3
Curriculum reference(s):	N1/E3.1, N1/E3.7
Curriculum element(s):	Understand numbers up to 1000, including numbers as words, number sequences and approximation by rounding
Skills diagnosis established	**Learner feedback** You do not seem to have many problems with your skills in this area of handling large numbers. Your assessor may want to assess your skills at a higher level. Tell your assessor if you think there is more work you need to do at this level.

Task number:	2
Task description:	Task 2: Whole numbers
Subject:	Numeracy
Curriculum area:	Number
Level:	Entry 3
Curriculum reference(s):	N1/E3.2, N1/E3.3
Curriculum element(s):	Add and subtract using 3-digit whole numbers and recall addition and subtraction facts up to 20
Skills diagnosis established	**Learner feedback** You do not seem to have many problems with your skills in this area of adding and subtracting whole numbers. Your assessor may want to assess your skill at a higher level. Tell your assessor if you think there is more work you need to do at this level.

Task number:	3
Task description:	Task 3: Whole numbers
Subject:	Numeracy
Curriculum area:	Number
Level:	Entry 3
Curriculum reference(s):	N1/E3.4, N1/E3.5
Curriculum element(s):	Multiply 2-digit numbers by single-digit whole numbers and recall multiplication facts.
Skills diagnosis consolidating	**Learner feedback** You have shown that you can use some of the skills of multiplying whole numbers at this level but there are others that you need to work on. Your assessor will discuss these with you.

Resources, publications and websites

Skills Check

- Tools Library Skills Checks available in paper-based and CD-ROM formats from www.toolslibrary.co.uk including standard, workplace and contextualised versions.
- Good Practice Guidance in *Skills Check and Initial Assessment*, available to download from www.toolslibrary.co.uk/guidance.htm

Initial and diagnostic assessment

- Tools Library initial assessments available in paper-based and CD-ROM formats from www.toolslibrary.co.uk including standard, workplace and contextualised versions.
- DfES Diagnostic Assessment Material Pack for Literacy (ref DAM1), Numeracy (ref DAM2), ESOL (ref DAM3) and Dyslexia (ref DAM4), also available as an interactive CD-ROM (ref DAM6) available from Prolog on 0845 6022260 or it can be ordered through www.dfes.gov.uk/readwriteplus
- *Good Practice Guidance in Skills Check and Initial Assessment*, available to download from www.toolslibrary.co.uk/guidance.htm
- *Improving Initial Assessment: Guide to Good Practice (Learning for Work for KSSP)*, available to download from www.lsneducation.org.uk/pubs/Pages/060002.aspx
- *Initial Assessment Toolkit for Key Skills and Skills for Life (Learning for Work for KSSP)*, available from the KSSP on 0117 971 9583. *Using Initial And Diagnostic Assessment to Improve Learning* (CPD materials developed through WOA): www.ksspforwork.net/guides.php
- *Planning Learning and Recording Progress and Achievement: A Guide For Practitioners* (DfES 2003), ref PLRA1, available from Prolog on 0845 6022260 or it can be ordered through www.dfes.gov.uk/readwriteplus
- *Initial Assessment: A Learner Centred Process*, M. Green (LSDA, 2003) order from www.lsneducation.org.uk/pubs/Pages/031842.aspx (ref 031842), £50.00.

ILPs

- *Improving Learner Achievement: Individual Planning and Assessment* (CPD materials developed through SfLQI): www.lsneducation.org.uk
- *Planning Learning and Recording Progress and Achievement: A Guide for Practitioners* (DfES 2003), ref PLRA1, available from Prolog on 0845 6022260 or it can be ordered through www.dfes.gov.uk/readwriteplus

Assessment for learning (formative assessment)

- *Using Assessment to Improve Learning* (CPD materials developed through WOA): www.lsneducation.org.uk
- *Recognition and Reward: Using Feedback for Learner Success, Moorse and Clough* (LSDA, 2003), order from www.lsneducation.org.uk/pubs/pages/031843.aspx
- The National Test Toolkit is available now to order from Prolog on 0845 6022260. Please quote ref: SFL NTT. This contains comprehensive information about the National Tests and includes both paper based and CD-ROM versions of the practice tests.

SfLIP assessment guidance leaflets

- *Assessment and the Learner Journey: A Manager's Guide*
- *Using Skills Checks*
- *Assessing Learners' Needs: A Learner-centred Approach to Initial and Diagnostic Assessment* (including a section on effective feedback to learners that encourages motivation and persistence and helps them to improve their performance).
- *Learners in Control: Using Assessment to Support Individual Learning Plans (ILPs)*
- *Using Formative Assessment* (to include the above section on effective feedback).

SfLIP CPD packages

- Supporting the Learner Journey: Developing Whole Organisation Processes and Quality Assurance Systems
- Using Skills Checks
- Assessing Learners' Needs: A Learner-Centred Approach to Initial and Diagnostic Assessment
- Learners in Control: Using Assessment to Support Individual Learning Plans (ILPs)

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