Key Skills
SUPPORT PROGRAMME
enhancing skills for life and work

Good practice guide
Key skills portfolio assessment

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Contents

Some publications from the Key Skills Support Programme

Effective self-assessment of key skills

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Unlocking your future (DVD and video)

For the full range of Key Skills Support Programme publications and online resources, please visit the website at www.keyskillssupport.net

Introduction

This publication is one of a series of Good Practice Guides published by the Key Skills Support Programme (KSSP). For a complete list of titles, please see the facing page.

What is the purpose of the guides?

The guides are designed to provide practical advice and guidance to teachers and trainers who deliver and assess key skills in schools, colleges, work-based learning and adult learning. Each guide can be used as an introduction, as a source of ideas, or for reference. They are based on the experience of centres that have been delivering key skills in recent years.

Who are the guides for?

The guides are written primarily for staff who are relatively new to key skills, though more experienced practitioners may also find them helpful. They will also be useful for key skills coordinators and managers.

What is this guide about?

This guide offers advice and guidance to key skills managers, coordinators and other practitioners who are responsible for ensuring that the standards of portfolio assessment in their centre are consistent across the centre and with national standards.

This guide does not include:

■ detailed advice and guidance on interpreting the key skills standards

■ advice on teaching and learning the key skills.

This guide should be read in association with *The key skills qualifications standards and guidance: communication, application of number and information and communication technology: Levels 1–4 2004*, published by QCA (ref QCA/04/1272) and available from QCA Publications (01787 884 444) or from the QCA website www.qca.org.uk/keyskills In this guide, it will be referred to as 'QCA Guidance'.

Terminology

The terminology associated with the assessment of key skills can be confusing, particularly when some of the terms are used interchangeably or when the processes overlap with each other.

The term 'external moderation' is used in this publication to refer to external quality assurance, undertaken by an awarding body. This is also sometimes known as external verification. The term 'internal moderation' is used to refer to internal quality assurance, carried out by an internal moderator. This is sometimes known as internal verification.

Other important terms are defined as they occur throughout the guide.

About assessment

The learner's journey

Assessment plays an important role throughout a learner's journey towards achievement. Figure 1 shows the process which you need to have in place to take learners from the starting point of recruitment through to achievement of the key skill. 'Recruitment' can mean to a course, programme or job – it is simply the starting point for the learner. Certification, at the other end of the process, might be for an individual key skill, a qualification which includes the key skills, or a wider programme.

This process is not necessarily linear; it can be an ongoing cycle and should take account of the range of qualifications or programmes a learner may be following.

Figure 1. The learner's journey
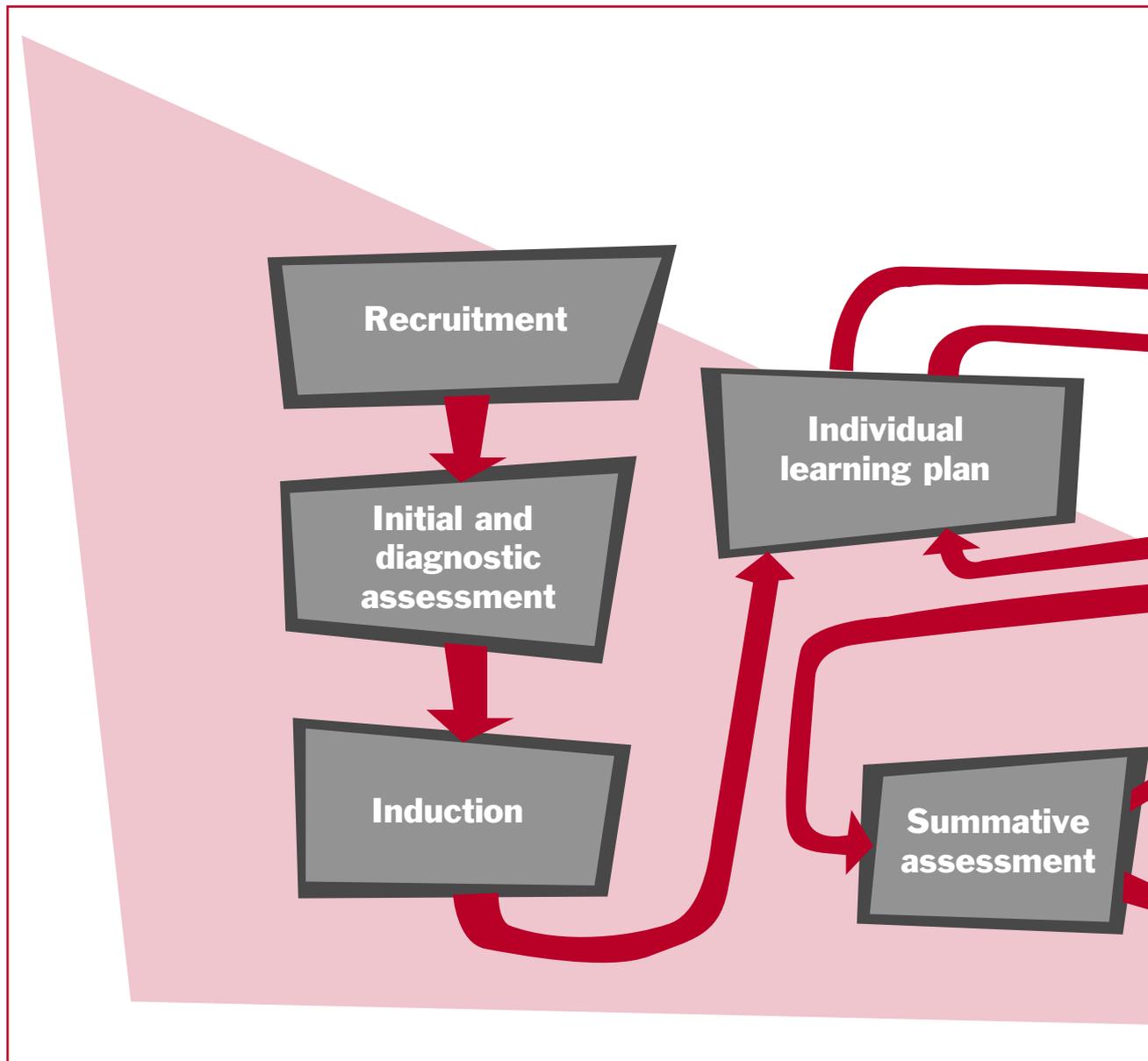
Learner assessment therefore includes:

- initial assessment to determine the appropriate key skill and level for a learner near the beginning of the process
- diagnostic assessment of a learner's skills and development needs near the beginning of the process and ongoing as the learner progresses
- formative assessment of a learner's skills and work throughout the process
- summative assessment of completed work in a learner's portfolio
- external assessment through testing.

This guide is principally concerned with the summative assessment of portfolio work or evidence. Pages 4 to 7 provide summary information about the other aspects of assessment in order to clarify the overall process.

Teaching, learning and formative assessment

Review

External tests

Portfolio

Certification
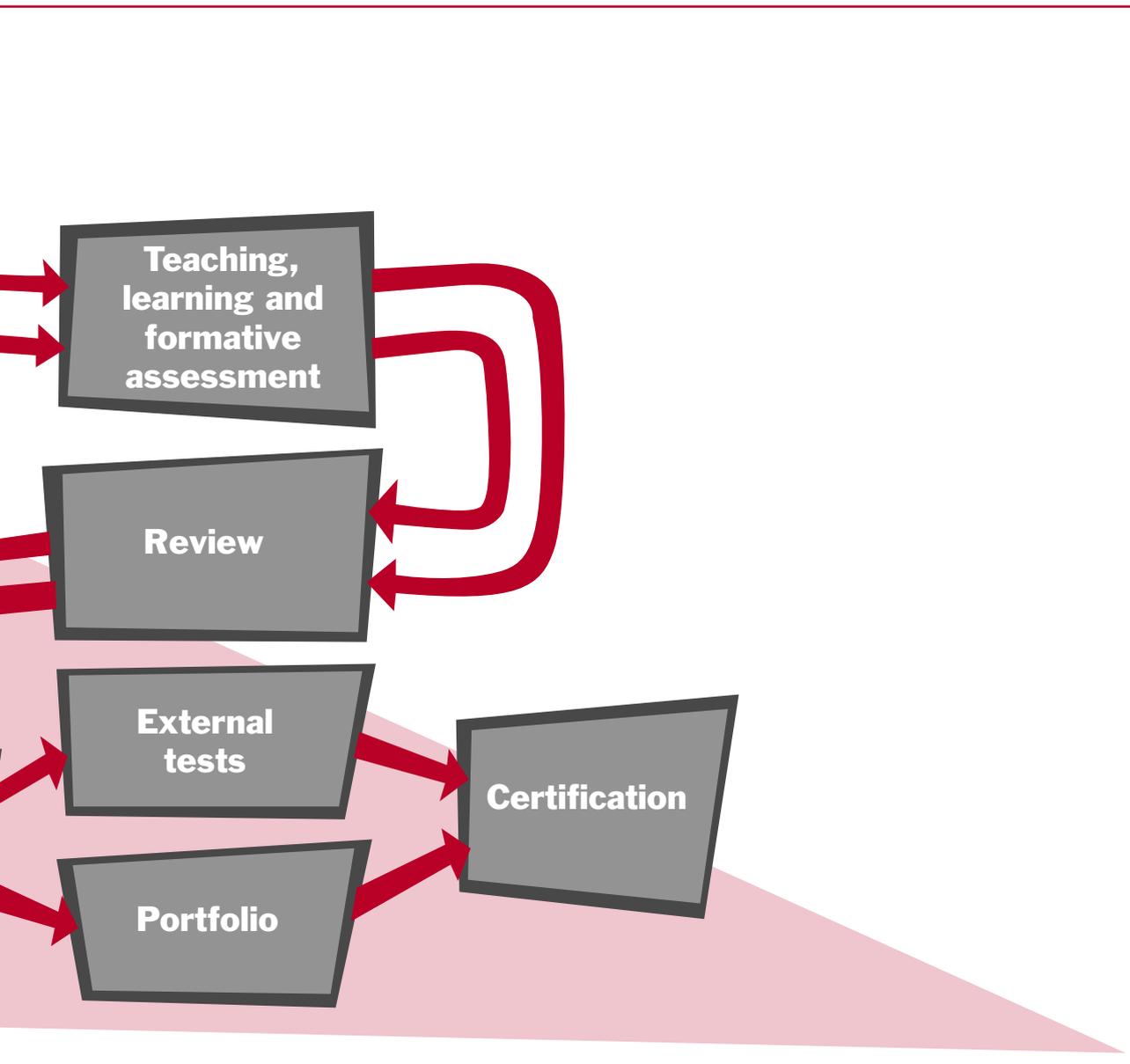
4 Initial assessment

If learners are to be successful with their key skills, they need to be working at a level that they can realistically achieve by the end of the programme. It should not be assumed, for example, that Level 2 key skills are appropriate for a learner simply because that is the level at which they are operating in their main programme of study. This is known as having a 'spiky' profile, where a learner's skills vary between and within key skills or subjects.

Carrying out initial assessment

There are a number of ways in which initial assessment can be done by a centre. For example, it can be carried out by a tutor, be based on learner self-assessment, or perhaps both. Whatever the method chosen by the centre, it is important that the initial assessment identifies learners' previous achievements, their strengths and weaknesses when beginning the programme, and their potential for achievement. This will enable teachers to plan how to develop the key skills of individual learners and give them the best chance of achieving at the level for which they are aiming.

> **Any single initial assessment tool or previous exam results alone are unlikely to give a full picture of a learner's strengths, weaknesses and potential. Learner self-assessment, teachers' observations of learners while working, and early coursework can help to determine the most effective ways of supporting learners to develop their key skills.**

Using the results of initial assessment

Information from initial assessment should be:

- included in the learner's individual learning plan
- used to set learning objectives and measure progress
- shared with other parties who are involved in developing the learner's key skills
- used to identify additional support required by the learner.

> The KSSP *Initial assessment toolkit for key skills and Skills for Life* provides guidance on initial assessment techniques and a range of resources. For details, see www.ksspforwork.org.uk

Diagnostic assessment

This should be used by centres as part of the initial assessment process to identify a learner's development needs. Although its application and uses may overlap with initial assessment, it is helpful to see it as a separate activity. Learners may need to have their development needs re-diagnosed during a course of learning or on completion of a programme or qualification, prior to embarking on the next stage.

As with initial assessment, a diagnostic assessment might include:

- one-to-one discussions
- self-assessment
- structured activities
- observation
- tests.

When planning what kind of diagnostic assessment you will carry out with your learners, you should reflect on:

- the information you have already gathered about the learner and how to avoid duplication
- how the experience will feel from the learner's point of view, eg will a test be demotivating?
- what would constitute a positive experience for the learner
- what kind of activity will provide you with useful information about the learner
- how you will use and share that information.

Diagnostic assessment is part of the ongoing cycle of plan, do, reflect and review that encourages reflection on performance and achievements before attempting the next stage of the learning programme.

Figure 2. The learning cycle
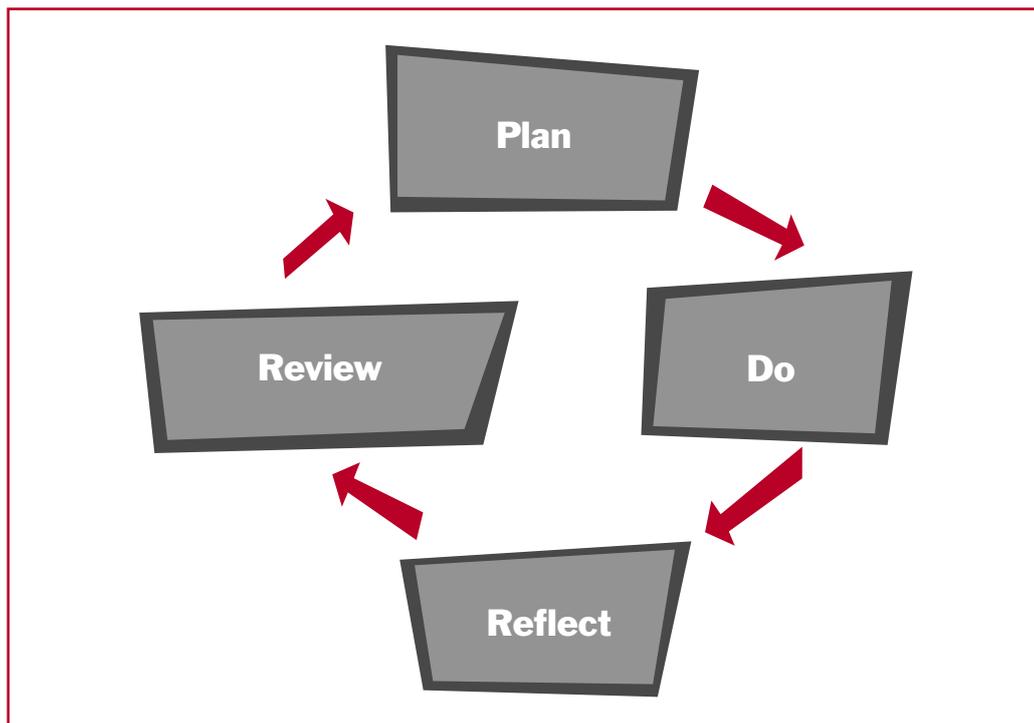
Formative assessment

Feedback given by the teacher to the learner is called formative assessment. The feedback can be written or verbal and should inform the learner about what has been done well and what needs to be improved in the future. Formative assessment is the pathway to summative assessment.

Key skills require learners to acquire new skills, practise and develop skills and apply those skills in suitable contexts. The key skills need to be taught, learned and developed. Figure 3 is a model of key skills development that demonstrates progression from learning the underpinning techniques of a key skill through to using the skills in a context and for a purpose.

Figure 3. A continuum of key skills development

Teacher led	Teacher guided	Independent learner
What learners need to know basic techniques and underpinning knowledge	**What learners need to do** practise and build skills	**What learners must be able to demonstrate** the ability to apply skills in different contexts
assessed by tests or questioning	internal formative assessment	portfolio evidence: internally assessed; internally moderated; externally moderated.
Relates to Part A of the key skills standards	Relates to Part B of the key skills standards	

The aim is for all learners to become independent learners and be able to apply their skills in a range of contexts. To achieve this, they need to acquire the basic techniques and underpinning knowledge and be given opportunities to practise and build skills.

Practitioners should be aware that work produced as part of this learning process undergoes formative assessment and is not included in the portfolio. Only work that shows competence and mastery of the key skills should be submitted for summative assessment.

Teaching and learning key skills is a complex topic. KSSP offers a comprehensive range of guides and resources, including a teaching and learning guide for each key skill and teaching and learning materials for a range of sectors including administration, care, child care, construction, hospitality, retail, and travel and tourism. All are available at www.keyskillssupport.net

All six key skills qualifications require candidates to complete a portfolio as part of their assessment.

External assessment

All qualifications in the National Qualifications Framework must include a form of independent assessment or an alternative that is approved by the regulatory authorities (QCA, DELLS, CCEA). In England and Northern Ireland, for the first three key skills qualifications, this requirement is met by external assessment in the form of tests which are externally set, taken under supervised conditions and externally marked. The tests provide evidence of depth, range and a capacity to apply skills in different contexts and within a specified timeframe.

For the wider key skills qualifications, candidates may be required to give satisfactory answers to questions asked by an assessor (see page 11).

KSSP offers guidance and a range of publications about the key skills tests. See www.keyskillssupport.net

Portfolio assessment

Assessing against the QCA standards

Summative assessment and moderation of a key skills portfolio requires assessors and moderators to judge the portfolio against the national standards. Moderation ensures that the standards of assessment in the centre are consistent both across the centre and with national standards.

The key skills standards are in three parts:

- Part A
  - □ what learners need to know how to do
  - □ what learners need to learn and practise

- Part B
  - □ what learners must show they can do
  - □ the skills for which learners must show evidence

- Guidance
  - □ examples of the techniques and knowledge in Part A
  - □ further guidance about the standards.

However, the process of assessing a portfolio inverts Part A and Part B and, as Figure 4 indicates, the process starts with Part B of the standards.

Figure 4. The stages of portfolio assessment

Part B
Are the evidence requirements met?

Part A
Are the standards met?

Guidance
Check the amplification of standards, eg accuracy.
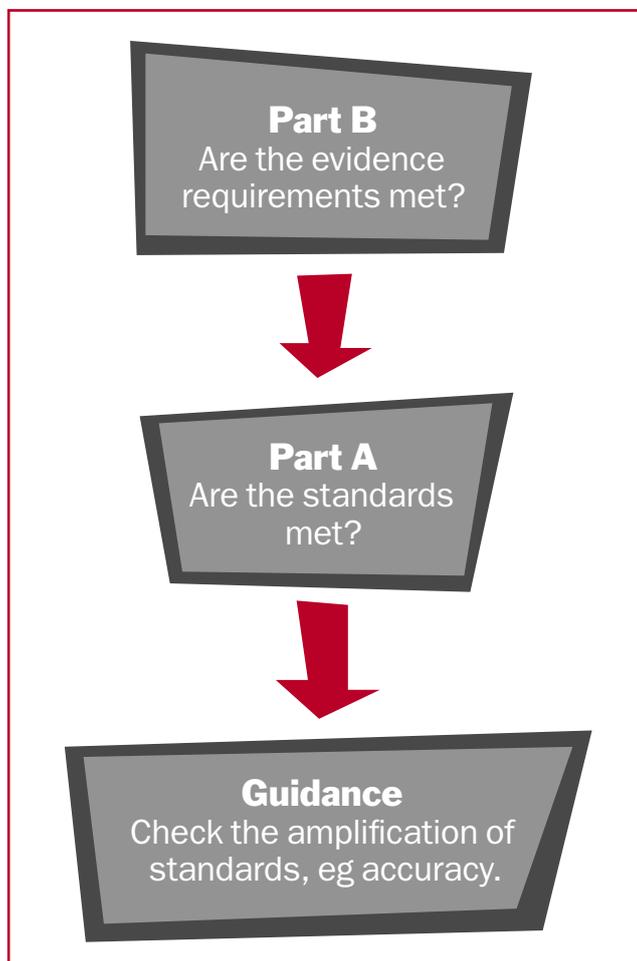
The steps to follow

For the purpose of this example let us assume that the written component for Communication at Level 2 (C2.3) is being assessed.

■ Consider whether the portfolio contains the evidence required by Part B of the standards. In C2.3, there must be two written documents.

C2.3 Write two different types of documents, each one giving different information. One document must be at least 500 words long.

■ If these documents are present, check the portfolio against the assessment criteria for C2.3. Is there evidence of the candidate meeting C2.3.1, C2.3.2, C2.3.3 and C2.3.4?

■ Next, refer to the QCA Guidance to determine the degree to which Part A of the key skills standards must be adhered to during the assessment of the portfolio.

Write documents

… proof-read and where necessary re-draft your documents so that:

- ☐ *spelling is accurate including familiar technical words*

- ☐ *sentences are formed correctly with accurate use of conjunctions*

- ☐ *punctuation is accurate including use of commas, apostrophes and inverted commas.*

■ Remember that evidence must also be accurate in terms of the Level 1 skills identified in Part A of the key skills standards for Communication Level 1:

eg *… sentences are marked by capital letters, full stops and question marks.*

■ Having considered the portfolio evidence against Part B and then Part A of the standards, apply the QCA Guidance for both Part A and Part B. It is only in the guidance that the level of accuracy can be confirmed, ie 'one or two errors'.

The concept of levels building on one another is an important point for all assessors and moderators to be aware of and applies to all key skills.

The KSSP *Good Practice Guide: Developing and managing portfolios* includes more advice about assessing portfolios against the QCA standards.

Assessor and moderator competence

Key skills assessors and internal moderators are not currently required to have specific qualifications, however:

Assessment of work against the key skills criteria should be carried out by someone with appropriate specialist expertise to understand the full implication of the standards.

The key skills qualifications standards and guidance (QCA 2004)

The awarding bodies offer training and support for assessors and internal moderators and can suggest appropriate qualifications.

Assessors and internal moderators should schedule regular standardisation meetings where they will have an opportunity to:

- receive advice on applying the key skill standard to their learners' work
- see the quality of their learners' work in the context of national levels of achievement
- share ideas and experiences with each other about evidence and assessment opportunities.

Awarding bodies

There are 16 awarding bodies offering key skills qualifications. These are listed on the QCA website at www.qca.org.uk/6448.html

Assessing work from other qualifications

Work that has been produced for another programme (eg GCSE/ A-level coursework, NVQ portfolio evidence) can be used as evidence in key skills portfolios. However, it must be clear that the work has been assessed separately against the key skills criteria and that it meets the key skills requirements.

Centres should find out from their awarding body how to present evidence that is produced in the context of another programme. Questions include:

- is the awarding body willing to accept a photocopy of the evidence?
- will the external moderator wish to see the original A-level or NVQ file?
- if there is a task or assignment brief has it been included in the portfolio?
- if the candidate has presented a joint portfolio, eg for NVQ and key skills, is the evidence relating to the key skill clearly labelled and indexed?
- if the evidence is not contained in a portfolio, eg a model, does the portfolio clearly indicate where it can be located?

Individualised assessment

Where candidates have produced work in pairs or groups, it must be assessed individually to determine whether or not each candidate has met the assessment criteria. This can be particularly problematic where candidates have given a joint presentation or have worked together to carry out research using ICT. It is the assessor's responsibility to ensure that portfolio work shows evidence of a candidate's individual competence.

Awarding bodies will expect assessors to confirm that work produced for the portfolio is that of one individual candidate, and that any work created using ICT was done without the input of others. Tutors therefore need to reassure themselves that that is the case before accepting evidence in portfolios.

Assessing the wider key skills

In addition to submitting a portfolio of evidence, candidates for the wider key skills may be required to give satisfactory answers to questions asked by an assessor. The assessor may select these questions (the 'Part A questions') from a list supplied by the awarding body in order to confirm the candidate's knowledge and understanding of areas of Part A. Guidance on how to record candidates' answers will be provided by your awarding body.

Top tips

- As part of your internal moderation process, give feedback regularly rather than at the end of the key skills programme, by which time it might be too late for teachers and candidates to address areas of weakness.

- Wherever possible, build key skills into wider programmes of study. This integration will help learners to apply and see the value of key skills.

- Get to know the key skills standards and guidance for the level of key skills you are delivering and for the level/s below. Focus on Part A as well as Part B.

- Don't be influenced in your assessment decisions by what you personally like or prefer. For example, you might like a particular format for business letters which the standards do not stipulate, so be prepared to accept any 'house style'. However, consistency in a document is crucial.

Internal moderation

Purpose and process

The purpose of internal moderation is to ensure that every assessor in the centre is assessing candidates' portfolio evidence consistently and to the national standards. It should be a cyclical process which impacts on every phase of assignment design, portfolio production, assessment and support. Figure 5 below illustrates this process and highlights some key points within it.

Figure 5. The internal moderation cycle

Prepare for external moderation

Forward plan

Train assessors

Quality assure assignments/ projects

Establish clear internal moderation procedures

Select and moderate a sample of portfolios
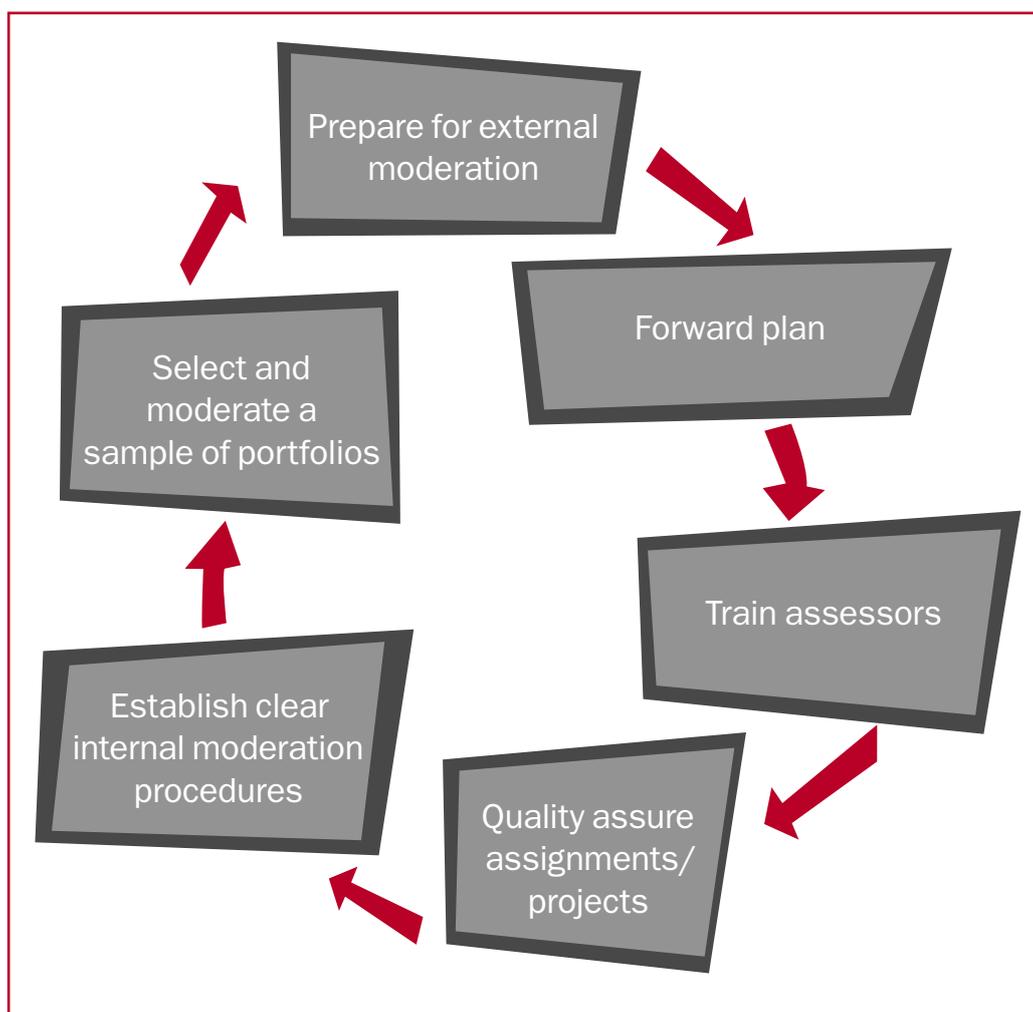
The role of internal moderator

Who can internally moderate?

The QCA Guidance does not stipulate who can or cannot be an internal moderator. There is an expectation that assessors are confident and competent in their understanding of the requirements of the standards, so it is reasonable to expect internal moderators to be equally competent and confident, if not more so.

In a small centre, internal moderation may be done by the key skills coordinator, or by an English, mathematics or ICT specialist. In larger centres, there may be a lead moderator with a team of internal moderators. Centres need to make sure that they have enough internal moderators to spread the workload.

> It may be that your awarding body gives guidance on what experience or expertise it expects an internal moderator to have, or your centre's policy on moderation might stipulate the key qualities required of an internal moderator.

Knowledge

Irrespective of any qualifications an internal moderator might have, they must have an in-depth understanding and knowledge of the key skills standards in order to:

- ensure that all assessors are operating to national standards
- offer appropriate support and guidance to new assessors.

Because of this, it is not unusual to see internal moderators with responsibility for specific key skills across a centre. For example, there might be a named internal moderator or team of moderators who have responsibility for ICT. Another internal moderator or team might have responsibility for Communication.

Planning

Most centres have found it helpful to have several internal moderation sessions scheduled over a year. This ensures that internal moderation is properly timetabled and that there is time to take action if an assessed piece of work is found to be below the required standard.

The tasks involved

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An internal moderator would usually be expected
to carry out the following activities:

■ check assessment standards at interim points in a programme

■ check assessment standards when portfolios are completed

■ ensure that assignments enable candidates to produce
evidence that will meet the key skills standards

■ meet regularly with other internal moderators to
standardise assessment across the centre

■ select and request the sample of portfolios to be moderated (see below)

■ check on the quality of key skills delivery

■ comment on the quality of assessment and feedback

■ monitor implementation of the centre's key skills policy

■ support and advise staff on key skills delivery

■ disseminate good practice in key skills

■ support and advise staff on the assessment of key skills

■ liaise with external moderators

■ monitor implementation of action plans following external moderation.

Sampling

The internal moderator should sample enough work to ensure that
the centre's summative assessment of key skills is consistent.
For each key skill, samples should be selected from all:

■ assessors
■ programmes or subject areas
■ levels
■ key skills
■ key skills components.

A pro forma for a sampling plan can be found in Appendix 1.

The internal moderator should decide on the size of the sample.
If assessors are new to key skills, the internal moderator may
need to look at all or most of the portfolios presented. However,
with experienced assessors, selecting a smaller sample
(in accordance with your awarding body guidelines) may be
appropriate. What is most important is that the internal moderator
should choose a sample which ensures that the standards of
assessment are consistent and in line with national standards.

**Guidance on sampling should be included in your
organisation's policy on internal moderation.**

Quality assuring assignments

Good practice suggests that learners should be encouraged to gather naturally occurring evidence for their key skills portfolios. Where this is not feasible, learners are sometimes set projects or assignments to assist in evidence gathering. It is important for centres to have these assignments reviewed by an internal moderator before they are delivered to learners. An example of an assignment checklist can be found in Appendix 2. It offer prompts that help the internal moderator to consider whether the assignment or project:

- is set in a relevant context
- identifies opportunities for demonstrating the key skills
- is clear in its description of the task or activity
- meets the requirements of Part B of the key skills standards
- offers opportunities for learners to apply their skills and knowledge.

Having reviewed an assignment or project, the internal moderator should provide detailed feedback on it to the writer, so that they know in what ways it might be improved. Some centres have created their own feedback forms for this purpose.

Remember to offer learners a range of assignments or project briefs to promote individualised learning. When devising assignments or projects it is also important to encourage input from learners and others, such as employers.

Ways of recording

There are many ways of recording findings and feedback from internal moderation. Your awarding body will usually provide examples of key skills moderation documentation along with guidance as to which documentation is compulsory. In addition, your centre may have already developed internal moderation documentation for use across all qualifications, including key skills.

Top tips

- Don't leave everything until the last minute. Schedule time for internal assessment over the course of the year.
- Ensure that your feedback to assessors is supportive and explains exactly what they need to do in relation to the key skills standards.
- Contact KSSP and your awarding body to identify training that could be useful for assessors or internal moderators.
- Ensure that CPD in your centre focuses on key skills.

External moderation

The procedures for external moderation vary from one awarding body to another but all awarding bodies will appoint an external moderator to a centre to ensure that internal assessment of candidates' key skills portfolios is valid, reliable, fair and consistent with national standards.

To give your learners the best chance for achievement, you should register them with an awarding body as early as possible. This is particularly important if you have candidates who may need special consideration. The awarding body will inform you of the name and contact details of your external moderator.

Differences between the awarding bodies

All external moderators, regardless of the awarding body, will reassess a sample of candidates' work. Some awarding bodies visit centres to do this; others will carry out sampling by post. Some awarding bodies undertake moderation; others will monitor internal quality assurance systems as well as the accuracy of assessment.

Because of the variety of systems and approaches, it is essential that you contact your awarding body to determine exactly what its processes are.

Autonomy for centres

Increasingly, awarding bodies are moving towards giving centres with a history of sound assessment and internal quality assurance the status of 'direct claim' or 'accredited' centre. This means they can make interim claims for certification prior to and/or between sampling by the external moderator.

These centres need not wait for an external moderator to visit or for the next postal moderation opportunity to be able to claim certification. So, if a number of candidates have completed their portfolios and have met the national standards, they can be certificated immediately. However, if an accredited centre has submitted a claim for portfolios which are later found not to meet the national standards, this status will be withdrawn.

Planning for an external moderation visit or postal sample

Irrespective of how your awarding body operates, it is essential that you plan well in advance when you want external moderation to take place. It should occur when a number of portfolios are complete and have already been through a thorough process of internal moderation. The timing of this may depend on whether all learners start and finish their programmes at the same time.

Cancellation of external moderation is costly to centres as the awarding body is likely to charge for rearranging the external moderation. So it is in your interests to give careful consideration to the scheduling of external moderation.

Your external moderator will tell you what portfolios they want to sample and will follow agreed guidelines in selecting the sample size. It is important that you liaise with your awarding body and/ or the external moderator early on to find out what they will want and when. Even if your centre has previous experience of external moderation, be prepared for some things to change. While the standards remain the same, sample size, method of moderation or the documentation required may vary. Make sure you are up to date.

Awarding bodies will usually aim to ensure that a centre has the same moderator for a reasonable period of time. However, this is not always possible.

Take note of the requirements of the awarding body. Some specify that a quiet room is made available for external moderators to look at the portfolios. Others might need to see staff, learners, or assessment actually taking place. In addition, they might need some other background information. For example, information about:

- the experience and qualifications of staff delivering key skills
- resources
- equal opportunities
- policies and procedures.

> **Always be prepared for the external moderation and do what you can to help things go smoothly. Offer your external moderator lunch if they are visiting; ensure that you attach the correct postage if sending portfolios by mail.**

Feedback from awarding bodies

Typically, an external moderator who visits a centre will discuss their findings with centre staff on the day. For some awarding bodies, the external moderator will confirm their decisions in a written report at the end of the visit. For others, the awarding body will send formal notification of their decisions in due course.

Feedback from awarding bodies suggests that centres are getting better at key skills delivery and that more portfolios are reaching the national standards. However, principal moderator reports indicate that some centres are still uncertain about the level of work expected of candidates or ask for external moderation late in the programme when it is difficult for candidates to rectify any areas identified for improvement in the portfolios.

> Each awarding body produces an annual Principal Moderator report for key skills. These can be found on awarding body websites and are invaluable to centres in highlighting potential pitfalls. Examples highlighted in recent years include issues around accuracy in Communication, size of data sets at different levels in Application of Number, and the need for combined information at some levels of ICT.

After external moderation

It is imperative that, following an external moderation, the key skills coordinator feeds back the outcomes to all stakeholders. This would obviously include senior management but, most importantly, all staff involved in the delivery and assessment of key skills in the centre.

All awarding bodies provide a written report of the moderation. It is essential that the contents of this report are circulated widely and used to inform the future delivery and assessment of key skills.

In many centres, the report will highlight good practice and it is as important to pass this on as it is to share any advice given in the report. For instance, the information could help centres to identify example portfolios from their own candidates which could be used for staff development and training.

Other information in the report could help internal moderators improve the effectiveness of their systems and practice or feed into the organisation's overall culture of ongoing improvement.

Dealing with disagreements over moderation decisions

If you do not agree with decisions made or advice given in an external moderation report, you should seek to discuss the disagreement with your external moderator in the first instance. If there's still a problem, contact your awarding body.

Top tips

- **Plan for the external moderation well in advance – do not leave it until the end of a programme when the learners have left and cannot put right any weaknesses in their evidence.**

- **If you have an effective internal moderation process in place, the external moderation will be a confirmation of your decisions.**

- **Make use of training and guidance from your awarding body and KSSP in advance of portfolios being developed – not as a response to an issue identified.**

- **Ensure that there is a system in place to disseminate the information in external moderation reports and to help share good practice across your centre.**

- **Look upon your external moderator as a critical friend and make use of the advice they can give you.**

Appendix 1
Internal moderation sampling plan

Key skill			
Name of internal moderator		Plan period from:	
		Plan period to:	

Assessor name	Candidate name	Component	Internal moderation date		Internal moderator's signature on date of internal moderation
			Planned	Actual	

Appendix 2
Checklist for quality assuring assignments

	✔	Comments
Is the assignment set in a context that is relevant to the learner?		
Is the activity interesting to the learner?		
Is the activity clear and explicit?		
Are the key skills opportunities clearly identified?		
Is there scope for the learner to work at the appropriate level?		
Is there scope for planning activities to cover more than one key skill?		
Can the learner easily understand the language used?		
Does the activity require the learner to apply knowledge, understanding and skills at the appropriate level?		
Can the learner demonstrate an appropriate degree of independence and choice?		
Can the learner easily access any necessary resources?		
Is the timescale for completing the assignment realistic?		
Does the activity allow the learner to meet all the relevant component assessment criteria from Part B?		
Does the assignment afford equal opportunity for all learners?		

Appendix 3
Linking moderation to the critical success factors

The table below provides an overview of the relationship between internal moderation and the 10 critical success factors that research and experience have identified as being essential to the effective implementation of key skills.

	Critical success factor	Some questions to ask
1	Promoting a positive agenda for key skills	Does our internal moderation process have credibility with staff?
2	Implementing an effective curriculum model	Do our internal moderators make a positive contribution to the teaching and learning of key skills in the curriculum?
3	Establishing clearly defined roles and responsibilities	Who is responsible for managing the internal moderation process? Do we have job descriptions for internal moderators? Who is responsible for liaising with the awarding body? Are key skills meetings, which include internal moderation, built into the meetings timetable?
4	Coordinating activity within teams and across the centre	How are staff kept up to date with developments concerning key skills? How is follow-up action on quality issues ensured? What arrangements are in place to coordinate internal and external moderation?
5	Delivering effective teaching and learning	What is the quality of our assessment and feedback arrangements? Are learners given prompt feedback?

	Critical success factor	Some questions to ask
6	**Establishing clear assessment procedures**	Are assessors confident and competent to assess to national standards?
		Are there effective arrangements to standardise internal assessment?
		How well are internal moderation arrangements working?
7	**Using resources efficiently and effectively**	Have all stages of the assessment and moderation process been costed?
		Have we liaised closely with the awarding body to ascertain the most efficient and economical way of managing assessment and internal moderation?
		Are we managing these processes effectively?
8	**Embedding quality assurance**	Is our internal moderation process working effectively and will it enable us to monitor performance during the year?
		Does the internal moderation process link with the overall quality assurance of the centre, contributing to self-assessment and development plans?
9	**Delivering appropriate staff development**	How do we obtain information on training needs and how do we use it?
		How is expertise shared between key skills specialists and subject tutors/teachers?
10	**Reviewing and planning ahead**	Do we listen to feedback from staff and from learners?
		Do we review assignment briefs after first time of use?
		Do we review procedures regularly?
		Do we plan the schedule of internal and external moderation in advance?

Appendix 4
Glossary

The following abbreviations are used in this glossary.

Guidance; Comm, AoN, ICT
for *The key skills qualifications standards and guidance: communication, application of number, and information and communication technology; Levels 1–4 2004.*

Guidance; WWO, IOLP, PS
for *The wider key skills qualifications standards and guidance: working with others, improving own learning and performance, and problem solving; Levels 1–4 2004.*

Key skills policy and practice
for *Key skills policy and practice: your questions answered.*

Details of these publications are provided at the end of the glossary.

Accuracy

(a) In Communication

Accuracy in written communication 'includes the ability to punctuate, spell and apply the rules of grammar with accuracy at increasing levels of sophistication'. Part A of the standards prescribes the skills required at each level. At Level 1, 'one or two' spelling mistakes may be tolerated, 'as long as these are not repeated in the second document'. The same applies at Levels 2 and 3, but only 'providing meaning is still clear'. However, fitness for purpose is an important factor (Guidance; Comm, AoN, ICT page 29).

At all levels, learners must demonstrate that they have checked the accuracy of their work, whether it is hand-written or word-processed.

(b) In Application of Number

The requirements for accuracy vary between the levels. For details on accuracy and checking, see Guidance; Comm, AoN, ICT: Level 1 pages 55–56; Level 2 page 60; Level 3 page 66.

Evidence of checking for accuracy is required at all levels. At Levels 1–3 'where there is a series of calculations of the same type, evidence of checking at least the first few of each type should be recorded for assessment purposes. For the remainder, accurate results should confirm that effective checking has taken place' (Guidance; Comm, AoN, ICT pages 55–56, 60, 66).

Assessment

(a) Formative assessment

See page 6.

For more information, see www.qca.org.uk/7659.html

(b) Summative assessment

See pages 8–11.

Assessor

The person responsible for the initial judgement of a candidate's performance against defined standards expressed as assessment criteria or mark schemes.

Awarding body

There are 16 awarding bodies offering key skills qualifications, including the unitary awarding bodies in England (AQA, Edexcel, OCR), WJEC in Wales and CCEA in Northern Ireland. They are listed on the QCA website www.qca.org.uk/603.html under 'Contacts'.

Complex

For the Communication key skill at Level 3, complex subjects include those that deal with abstract or sensitive issues, and lines of enquiry dependent on clear reasoning. The subject matter, as well as having a number of strands, must also be challenging to the individual candidate in terms of the ideas it presents (Guidance; Comm, AoN, ICT pages 43–44). At Level 3, the candidate must write two different types of documents, each one giving different information about complex subjects.

For Application of Number at Level 3, the activity from which evidence is taken must be complex, requiring candidates to consider carefully the nature and sequence of tasks when planning how to obtain and use information to suit their purpose (Guidance; Comm, AoN, ICT page 68).

Diagnostic assessment

See page 5.

Evidence

Key skills candidates have to produce a portfolio of evidence to demonstrate that they have the skills required to meet Part B of the relevant key skills standards. Evidence can include written material, computer printouts, artwork, photographs, artefacts, audio and/or video recordings, and witness statements/testimony. See also 'Portfolio' and 'Witness statement'.

Exemption

Key skills candidates can claim exemption from all or part of particular key skills qualifications (most commonly the test) for up to three years from the date of the award of specific accredited proxy qualifications. See also 'Proxy qualifications'.

External assessment

See page 7.

External moderation

See pages 16–18.

Fitness for purpose

Key skills portfolio evidence should be appropriate for the wider context and purpose for which it was produced. See also 'Purposeful'.

Grading

There are no grades for key skills. Candidates either 'pass' or 'fail'.

Independent assessment

See page 7.

Information

Where the standard for the key skill Information and Communication Technology, at every level, refers to 'information', this can take the form of text and/or images and/or numbers.

Initial assessment

See page 4.

Internal assessment

See pages 8–11.

Internal moderation

See pages 12–15.

Key skills qualifications

All six key skills are qualifications in their own right and are included in the National Qualifications Framework at Levels 1 to 4.

National Qualifications Framework

The National Qualifications Framework was created by the 1997 Education Act and revised in 2004. It includes all external qualifications that are accredited by QCA (DELLS in Wales and CCEA in Northern Ireland), plus degrees and other higher-level qualifications which are regulated by the universities and QAA. It has nine levels: Entry level and Levels 1 to 8. Key skills qualifications are available at Levels 1 to 4. See www.qca.org.uk/493.html

Part A and Part B

All the key skills standards are made up of these two parts. Part A sets out what the candidate must know, understand and be able to do; Part B sets out what the candidate must do, ie the evidence they must present in their portfolio.

Portfolio

Candidates for a key skills qualification have to organise and present a portfolio of evidence of how they have met the requirements of Part B of the standard at the appropriate level. The portfolio is usually a file of hard copy but may be an electronically based storage and retrieval system (an e-portfolio) (Guidance; Comm, AoN, ICT page 14).

Proxy qualifications

Proxy qualifications are qualifications that have been agreed to assess the same knowledge and skills as aspects of the key skills qualifications. Because of this overlap, key skills candidates can claim exemption from all or part of particular key skills qualifications (most commonly the test) for up to three years from the date of the award of the specific proxy qualification. For the current list of proxy qualifications, see the QCA website www.qca.org.uk/603.html See also 'Exemption' and 'Relaxation'.

Purposeful

Key skills evidence must be generated in the context of a task or activity that satisfies some purpose in the candidate's work or leisure. Evidence that is collected simply to satisfy the requirements of the key skills portfolio is not purposeful and does not meet the assessment requirement. See also 'Fitness for purpose'.

Questioning

See page 11.

Relaxation

The relaxation ruling allows apprentices and advanced apprentices who started on or after 1 September 2001, and who have achieved a grade A*–C GCSE in English and/or mathematics, to complete their frameworks without being required to take the Level 2 Communication and/or Application of Number key skills qualifications. This also applies to those who have achieved a GCE AS/A-level at grade A–E in English or mathematics. Achievement of the GCSE, AS or A-level must be no longer than five years before the date of registration on the Apprenticeship framework. This five-year limit took effect on 1 August 2004 and replaced the previous three-year limit. See *Key skills policy and practice* para 9.5.

This is distinct from the use of proxy qualifications.

Straightforward

(a) Straightforward subjects and materials are those that candidates commonly meet in the context in which they are working or studying, or in other activities. The content is put across in a direct way so that candidates can easily identify the information they need for their task. In Communication, sentence structures are simple and candidates will be familiar with the vocabulary.

(b) Straightforward tasks can be broken down into easily-managed steps and involve familiar resources and situations (Guidance; WWO, IOLP, PS page 23).

Tests

In England and Northern Ireland, summative assessment of the first three key skills includes a written or on-screen test. Details can be found on the QCA website www.qca.org.uk/603.html There are no such tests for the wider key skills but see 'Questioning'. The tests for Communication and for Application of Number at Levels 1 and 2 also act as the tests for adult literacy and adult numeracy at these levels (Guidance; Comm, AoN, ICT page 26).
See also 'External assessment'.

Transferable

Key skills are transferable. This means simply that once a learner has developed a skill for the purpose of one context, they should be able to identify when and how to apply the same skill for another purpose in another context.

Witness statement

This is a statement (sometimes called 'witness testimony') that is signed by a competent person and confirms that the candidate has completed the activity in question at the required standard, eg taken part in a discussion. A witness statement should not be the sole form of evidence. Assessors are responsible for judging the validity of witness statements. They are most likely to be used in Communication (Guidance; Comm, AoN, ICT pages 33, 37, 43 and 49), Information and Communication Technology (Guidance; Comm, AoN, ICT pages 80 and 84–5) and in the wider key skills.

Note

Copies of the following publications can be ordered from:

QCA Publications
PO Box 99
Sudbury
Suffolk CO10 2SN

Tel 01787 884 444
Fax 01787 312 950

The key skills qualifications standards and guidance: communication, application of number, and information and communication technology (ref: QCA/04/1272; price: £10)

The wider key skills qualifications standards and guidance: working with others, improving own learning and performance, and problem solving (ref: QCA/04/1294; price: £10)

Copies of *Key skills policy and practice: your questions answered* can be ordered free of charge from:

Key Skills Policy Team
Room E3c
Moorfoot
Sheffield S1 4PQ

Tel 0114 259 3759
E-mail key.skills@dfes.gsi.gov.uk

All three publications can be downloaded from the QCA website www.qca.org.uk/603.html

Appendix 5 **Useful addresses**

AoC (Association of Colleges)
5th Floor
Centre Point
103 New Oxford Street
London
WC1A 1RG
Tel 020 7827 4600
www.aoc.co.uk

AQA (Assessment and
Qualifications Alliance)
Devas Street
Manchester M15 6EX
Tel 0161 953 1180
Publications 0870 410 1036
www.aqa.org.uk

ASDAN (Award Scheme
Development and
Accreditation Network)
Wainbrook House
Hudds Vale Road
St George
Bristol BS5 7HY
Tel 0117 941 1126
www.asdan.co.uk

BSA (Basic Skills Agency)
Commonwealth House
1–19 New Oxford Street
London WC1A 1NU
Tel 020 7405 4017
Publications 0870 600 2400
www.basic-skills.co.uk

CCEA (Northern Ireland
Council for the Curriculum,
Examinations and Assessment)
29 Clarendon Road
Clarendon Dock
Belfast BT1 3BG
Tel 028 9026 1200
www.ccea.org.uk

CfBT (Centre for British Teachers)
60 Queens Road
Reading RG1 4BS
Tel 0118 902 1000
www.cfbt.com

City & Guilds
1 Giltspur Street
London EC1A 9DD
Tel 0207 294 2468
www.city-and-guilds.co.uk
www.key-skills.org

DELLS (Department of Education,
Lifelong Learning and Skills)
Castle Buildings
Womanby Street
Cardiff CF10 1SX
Tel 029 2037 5400
www.ccw.org.uk

DfES (Department for
Education and Skills)
Key Skills Policy Team
Room E3c
Moorfoot
Sheffield S1 4PQ
Tel 0114 259 3759
Publications 0845 602 2260
www.dfes.gov.uk/keyskills

Edexcel
One90 High Holborn
London WC1V 7BH
Tel 0870 240 9800
Publications 01623 467 467
www.edexcel.org.uk

Key Skills Support Programme
Regent Arcade House
19–25 Argyll Street
London W1F 7LS
Helpline 0870 872 8081
kssp@LSDA.org.uk
www.keyskillssupport.net

Learning for Work
The Cottage Office,
Eightlands Road
Dewsbury
West Yorkshire WF13 6PF
0870 758 1411
mail@lfw.org.uk

LSC (Learning and Skills Council)
Cheylesmore House
Quinton Road
Coventry CV1 2WT
Tel 0845 019 4170
www.lsc.gov.uk

LSN (Learning and Skills Network)
Regent Arcade House
19–25 Argyll Street
London W1F 7LS
Tel 020 7297 9000
Information Services
020 7297 9144
enquiries@LSNeducation.org.uk
www.lsneducation.org.uk

OCR (Oxford Cambridge
and RSA Examinations)
Coventry Office
Progress House
Westwood Way
Coventry CV4 8JQ
Tel 0247 647 0033
Publications 0870 770 6622
www.ocr.org.uk

Ofsted
Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE
Tel 08456 40 40 45
Publications 0700 263 7833
www.ofsted.gov.uk

QCA (Qualifications and
Curriculum Authority)
83 Piccadilly
London W1J 8QA
Tel 020 7509 5555
Publications 01787 884444
www.qca.org.uk/keyskills

QIA (Quality Improvement Agency)
Friars House
Manor House Drive
Coventry CV1 2TE
Enquiries: 0870 211 3434
www.qia.org.uk

UCAS (Universities and College
Admissions Service)
Rosehill
New Barn Lane
Cheltenham GL52 3LZ
Tel 01242 222 444
Publications 01242 544 610
www.ucas.ac.uk

About this publication

This guide offers advice and guidance to key skills managers, coordinators and other practitioners who are responsible for ensuring that the standards of key skills portfolio assessment in their centre are consistent across the centre and with national standards.

It describes and offers advice and guidance on the stages of assessment and internal moderation of key skills portfolios and on liaising with an awarding body about external moderation.

About KSSP

LSN, in partnership with Learning for Work, supports the delivery and implementation of key skills within schools, colleges, work-based learning and adult learning providers. We do this by providing advice, training, information and resources to learners, teachers, trainers and managers. For more information, visit www.keyskillssupport.net or call the helpline on 0870 872 8081.