

Core Skills Policy

October 2016

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and electronic format.

Ask Student Services for details.

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Version Control History

Version Number	Date of Change	Summary of Revisions Made
3	November 2008	Version in effect pre-document control
4	April 2010	Updated from old style to new cross-college policy style
	November 2011	Archived, QUAL061 Skills for Life, Learning and Work Policy created instead
5	October 2016	Reinstated and updated with a revised purpose that defines Core Skills, clarifies the Key Principal that students should work towards gaining one level above their verified and recorded level on entry, with a process identified for exceptions to this. This includes the need to attain (where possible) the minimum level needed to gain their Group Award. Core Skills delivery options are documented in Appendix 1. Core Skills delivery staff are responsible for keeping the PAT updated with the status of students for progression decisions. Quality monitoring will be recorded in the Course Annual Report.
5.1	December 2018	Change of role to Quality Manager and other job titles to adhere to current structure.

1 Purpose

- 1.1 Core skills are a group of 5 skills that are essential to learning and working in today's world. Employers have identified these skills as those that are most likely to be needed in any work environment. This does not mean that every job will need people who are proficient in all 5 core skills but it does mean that every job will require some level of ability in some or all of these skills.
- 1.2 The college is committed to supporting the development of core skills within the curriculum design, learning and teaching approaches, and wider achievement opportunities. The opportunity for all learners to develop and enhance their core skills is crucial to the learning experience. This is a one college approach to the student experience rooted in all curriculum areas.
- 1.3 The development of core skills is a key requisite to provide wider essential skills to engage with aspects of health and wellbeing, employability, enterprise and citizenship, sustainability and equality and diversity. The Curriculum for Excellence provides us with a focus and context for ensuring the skills are delivered in an integrated manner.

2 Scope

- 2.1 This policy covers non-advanced provision of full-time, community, infill and modern apprenticeship SQA courses. The college emphasises the importance of core skills to all awards, and within the scope of awarding body criteria, the same principles should be followed.
- 2.2 Access to Higher National awards will recognise entry and exit core skills profiles as required by SQA. College approaches to admissions, diagnostic assessment and learning and teaching approaches will seek to enhance core skills development.

3 Definitions

- 3.1 The 5 core skills are: Communication, Numeracy, Information and Communication Technology, Problem Solving and Working with Others. Each core skill is available at levels 2-6 of the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF).
- 3.2 The Skills framework is a mapping tool to ensure the following elements are covered:
 - Numeracy
 - Literacy/Communications
 - Health and Wellbeing
 - Employability, Enterprise and Citizenship (including IT, Working with Others and Problem Solving)
 - Sustainability
 - Equality and Diversity
 - Thinking Skills

Refer to the Skills for Life, Learning and Work policy ([click here to access the policy](#)) and Appendices for further information.

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Lead Author: Sector Development Director, BMCL
Review Timing/Date: 4 years/2020/21

4 Key Principles

4.1 Learner Focus

Core skills are demonstrable at a range of levels appropriate to the programme of study, encompassing and assessing all elements of competence at these stated levels.

The core skills level a student is considered to be working towards is one greater than that showing on their SQA profile, on entry (verified and recorded as "level on entry"). A student may only be considered for exemption if they have attained level 6, and this is agreed by the Lecturer, the Personal Academic Tutor (PAT) and the student.

Where no SQA profile exists, students must undergo diagnostic assessment in the core Skills of Numeracy, Communication and Information and Communication Technology. They are then placed on the appropriate level and, with the support of their lecturer, work towards achieving the outcomes at that level. Feedback from the diagnostic assessment will be forwarded to the relevant PAT for information. Where a diagnostic assessment indicates additional support requirements, the PAT will be informed and be responsible for alerting the Learning Zone team of any additional support requirements.

Those students who may have difficulty in attaining the minimum level of core skill attainment required for their programme, may be offered a range of learning support measures including: additional support materials, access to additional workshop sessions and, where necessary, to a Study Skills Support Tutor.

All subject specialist lecturers delivering a unit in which a core skill is embedded as part of the Examining Body's policy framework must emphasise to students where the core skill is embedded and encourage them to reflect on their learning and development of transferability. This process of reflection and review must be supported by the Personal Academic Tutor during regular Personal Development Planning sessions throughout the year.

4.2 Learner Progression

Core skills is recognised to be at the heart of the lifelong learning agenda and students must be given the opportunity to learn and build on their core skills. To this end, it is the responsibility of all lecturers to promote student awareness of core skills and their significance in terms of lifelong learning.

All non-advanced programmes should demonstrate the inclusion of core skills as part of their internal approval process and demonstrate the full breadth of core skills as they are detailed. It will be normal policy that Numeracy, Communication and Information and Communication Technology will be part of a taught curriculum, and that Working with Others and Problem Solving should be achieved as part of other unit outcomes.

Wherever possible, students will be encouraged to attain beyond their minimum level and to progress to achieve their individual potential within core skills levels, and where relevant attain the minimum level required to attain their Group Award.

4.3 **Equality of Opportunity**

Development of core skills is a whole college responsibility and available to every student in line with Equality and Diversity.

4.4 **Contextualisation**

The college is committed, wherever possible and within the limits of its resources, to contextualising learning in order to demonstrate the relevance of core skills within vocational areas. To this end core skills' staff will work with curriculum staff to develop appropriate materials and teaching and learning strategies for the delivery of Numeracy, Communication and Information and Communication Technology.

Appendix 1 indicates the range of core skills delivery options and these will be used and developed as part of an ongoing enhancement of learning and teaching in this area to focus on attainment and wider achievement.

4.5 **Quality**

A range of delivery models is considered (discrete, contextualised, integrated or cross-assessed) and Course Teams consult with those delivering core skills to this end. Where core skills are said to be embedded, Course Teams must be able to demonstrate where and how the core skills are delivered and assessed, and must be able to specify individual units, outcomes, PCs and instruments of assessment.

Staff delivering a core skills unit will attend relevant course meetings wherever possible and will liaise with Course Teams on an ongoing basis.

Staff delivering a core skills unit have a responsibility to update the relevant PAT with details of: absence in excess of 2 weeks, behavioural issues and attainment concerns on a regular basis.

The attainment of required core skills will be taken into account in the requirement of achievement to gain an award and reviewed at Progression Boards. Accreditation and/or competence in core skills will be considered in the appropriate decision of admission to further courses of study and into HE courses. Various means of diagnostic testing may be used to inform this as required.

The planning, development and implementation of all core skills subjects will be evaluated throughout the academic year to ensure that it remains current and reflects the Skills Framework. This should be identified in the annual monitoring documentation, such as Team Evaluation Documents and Course Annual Reports.

5 Responsibilities

5.1 Depute Principal, Academic

As the senior member of staff with responsibility for Learning and Teaching the Depute Principal, Academic holds overall responsibility for the Core Skills Policy.

5.2 Sector Development Director, Business, Management, Computing and Leisure

Will manage the implementation and co-ordination of delivery of core skills in relation to the Core Skills policy.

5.3 Sector Manager/Subject Leader

Will work with individuals and teams in their Curriculum Area to ensure that the policy is implemented accordingly as well as ensuring that staff teaching core skills will support the delivery and compliance with policy and process.

5.4 Sector Manager

Relevant Subject Area Sector Manager of staff teaching core skills will support the delivery and compliance with policy and process.

5.5 All Staff Teaching Core Skills

Have responsibility for the promotion of the core skills policy.

5.6 Quality Manager

Has responsibility for the approval and review aspects of this policy and to ensure that the policy is posted on the website.

6 Linked Policies/Related Documents

6.1 Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy

6.2 Equality and Diversity Policy

6.3 Monitoring and Evaluation Policy

6.4 Core Skills Procedure

6.5 Assessment Policy

6.6 Skills for Life, Learning and Work Framework and Policy

Appendix 1

Spectrum of Core Skills Provision

The acquisition of transferable core skills is viewed as fundamental to learner success within certificated programmes and for progression to higher academic levels, employment and everyday life.

In practice, the actual delivery model(s) chosen are dependent on available resources and compromises or choices often have to be made. A simple model to illustrate the spectrum of core skills provision may help to summarise these options:

	Discrete	Contextualised	Integrated	Cross Assessed
Outline	Groups are timetabled to attend formal classes in the Study Centre for a notional total of 36 hours with discrete summative assessment activities.	Similar to discrete provision but with some delivery or assessment activities set in a vocational context.	Where appropriate, delivery and/or assessment may be undertaken by either a Core Skills' specialist within a vocational class or by a vocational specialist within a Core Skills' class (or a mix).	Where appropriate, tools of assessment are created jointly by Core Skills' specialist and the vocational specialist, and delivered jointly.
Pros	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Easy to timetable. ▪ Easy to track/monitor. ▪ Facilitates transferability. 	As for discrete, plus: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ May provide greater motivation. ▪ Can help to emphasise importance/relevance. 	As for contextualised, plus: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Can foster greater shared practice and better relationships between teaching staff. 	As for integrated, plus: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Learners can achieve multiple credits from one activity.
Cons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Can appear to be non-vocationally relevant. ▪ Difficult to motivate certain groups. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Resource intensive to establish. ▪ Difficult to tailor levels appropriately. ▪ Not possible for all components of all core skills. ▪ Contingencies required. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Resource intensive (team teaching). ▪ Timetable challenges. ▪ Contingencies required. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Resource intensive at planning stage – time. ▪ Timetabling. ▪ Marking.

Optimum delivery **may** involve elements of all 4 approaches.

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