UHI | PERTH

Essential and Future Skills Policy

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 Principle 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.
5.2	March 2023	Rebranded.
6	May 2023	Major revision. Changed title from Core Skills Policy to Essential and Future Skills Policy. Updated content to reflect new policies including UHI Learning and Teaching Enhancement Strategy, Scottish Government's Scotland's Future Skills Action Plan March 2021, CDN's Essential Skills Statement of Ambition, and the SDS Strategic Plan 2022-27: Skills for a Changing World. Added sections on: • A non-exhaustive list of 101 essential skills. • Defining Career- ready Skills or Meta-Skills. • Developing the T-Shaped work ready individual. Added some more content on general responsibilities for staff and updated Appendix 1 to include an embedded delivery model. The new Essential and Future Skills policy has encompassed content from the Meta Skills Policy and the Skills for Life, Learning and Work Policy and these policies should be removed from circulation.
6.1	December 2023	Minor change to point 12.2 – Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy Minor change to Section 11 Responsibilities to update quality role to Head of HROD and refine staff responsibilities.

1 Introduction

1.1 Much has been written about the vital importance of developing essential skills in tertiary education and the importance of essential skills to life generally and to, employment. Experience suggests that employers' demands for essential skills are now better understood and that the commitment of the tertiary education sector to developing essential skills has become increasingly clear. To maintain consistency and avoid repetitive caveats, the term 'essential skills' is used throughout this report rather than 'soft skills', 'people skills', etc. However, as will become clear, this report does not favour the use of 'essential skills' over any alternative terminology.

SDS highlight that:
"Technological and Societal disruptions are coming at us thick and fast. Whilst we cannot predict the future, we can prepare for a future that is increasingly unpredictable. A focus on skills and human capital gives us a strong foundation from which to build a sustainable and inclusive Scottish and GB economy. Scotland's citizens need the skills not only to cope with the change but to thrive in it, and more so be able to exploit novelty and create change for themselves."

1.2 UHI Perth recognises that Essential and Future Skills are as critical as vocational skills to employers and is committed to the development of these skills as part of the overall student experience for all programmes of study. The importance of Essential and Future Skills in developing students' skills for work and life have been highlighted at a national level in the Scottish Government's Skills for Scotland Strategy and in CDN's Essential Skills Statement of Ambition, and at a local level in the UHI Perth Learning and Teaching Strategy and the UHI Learning and Teaching Enhancement Strategy (LTES). These strategies have been designed and developed as an enabling strategy for enhancement and innovation in learning, teaching and assessment across the tertiary education spectrum of UHI, in ways that are befitting of our unique structure and mission, our geographically and digitally distributed nature, and our 'Where learning means more' ethos.

1.3 UHI Perth will support the Skills Development Scotland (SDS) Skills 4.0 model to drive Scotland's future. Scotland needs to ensure we prepare our students so they can thrive as individuals in a fast-changing future environment by developing their capacity to excel, to collaborate and empathise with others and to create their own futures. UHI Perth will ensure that we develop the "Career-Ready skills" defined by SDS as 'meta-skills' of our learners. All programmes of study will place a focus on those timeless, transferable, and higher order skills that equip individuals to become adaptive learners and promote continued success.

1.4 This Policy has been drafted to ensure that UHI Perth can meet the objectives within the Scottish Government's Scotland's Future Skills Action Plan March 2021. The objectives within this policy are to:

- Develop digitally enabled and smart individuals.
- Enable students to make a positive contribution to environmental sustainability.
- Develop the student cohort as global citizens.
- Ensure students develop employability. Enterprise and metacognitive skills.
- Develop highly skilled and work ready individuals.

1.5 This Policy sets out a clear definition of Essential and Future Skills and the University's approach to providing opportunities for their development. The term Essential Skills encompasses SQA's five Core Skills (Communication, Numeracy, ICT, Problem Solving and Working with Others) together with other Essential and Future Skills as defined below. It is mandatory that all students develop their Core Skills to the level required for their course and the approach for Core Skills delivery is described, later, within this document.

1.6 The development of essential skills for learning, life and work can be achieved through a balanced curriculum in which education providers align their activities with local, regional, national, and international requirements for knowledge, social awareness and employability. There is fundamentally a different nature of vocational and essential skills. The definition of vocational skills within a balanced curriculum is a relatively straightforward process as opposed to essential skills which 'come in all shapes and sizes', ie they are naturally multifaceted. The result is that the understanding, teaching, and measuring of essential skills require a versatile approach from education providers.

2 Scope

2.1 This policy applies to all full-time Further Education students. UHI Perth 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 Part-time Further Education students and Higher Education students will also have the opportunity to develop their Essential and Future Skills and/or Career Ready Skills appropriate to their programme of study.

2.3 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. Problem Solving and Working with Others will normally be embedded within all full-time FE programmes as well as all MA SVQ Level 2 and Level 3 programmes. Where they must be delivered discretely, learning and teaching tasks and instruments of assessment will be contextualised according to student's vocational areas and subject specialisms. 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.

Skills for Life, Learning and Work Meta Skills are all referenced in this policy.

A non-exhaustive list of 101 essential skills:

• Accountability	• Empathy	• Personal appearance
• Adaptability	• Enterprising	• Personal energy
• Agility	• Enthusiasm	• Planning
• Analytical	• Environmental awareness	• Political awareness
• Assertiveness	• Etiquette	• Positive attitude
• Body language	• Flexibility	• Presentation skills
• Building relationships	• Following instructions	• Problem solving
• Business awareness	• General knowledge	• Professionalism
• Character	• Global awareness	• Punctuality
• Coaching	• Goal setting	• Reasoning
• Commitment to learning	• Good attendance	• Reliability
• Common sense	• Good manners	• Resilience
• Communication	• Helpful	• Resourceful
• Community spirit	• Honesty	• Respectful
• Completing the job	• Imaginative	• Responsible
• Composure	• Influencing	• Result oriented
• Conducting meetings	• Innovation	• Risk management
• Confident	• Inspiring	• Safety conscious

• Conflict management	• Integrity	• Self-awareness
• Conscientious	• Interpretive	• Self-directed
• Consensus building	• Introspective	• Self-esteem
• Conviction	• Leadership	• Self-motivated
• Co-operation	• Listening	• Strategic thinking
• Counselling	• Management	• Stress management
• Courtesy	• Mentoring	• Supportive
• Creativity	• Moral	• Task management
• Critical thinking	• Negotiating	• Team building
• Cultural awareness	• Observation	• Team learning
• Dealing with ambiguity	• Openness	• Time management
• Decision making	• Organising	• Trustworthiness
• Delegating	• Passion	• Visionary
• Demeanour	• Patient	• Wellbeing
• Dependability	• Perceptive	• Work ethic
• Determined		
• Diligence		

4 Defining Career-Ready Skills or Meta-Skills

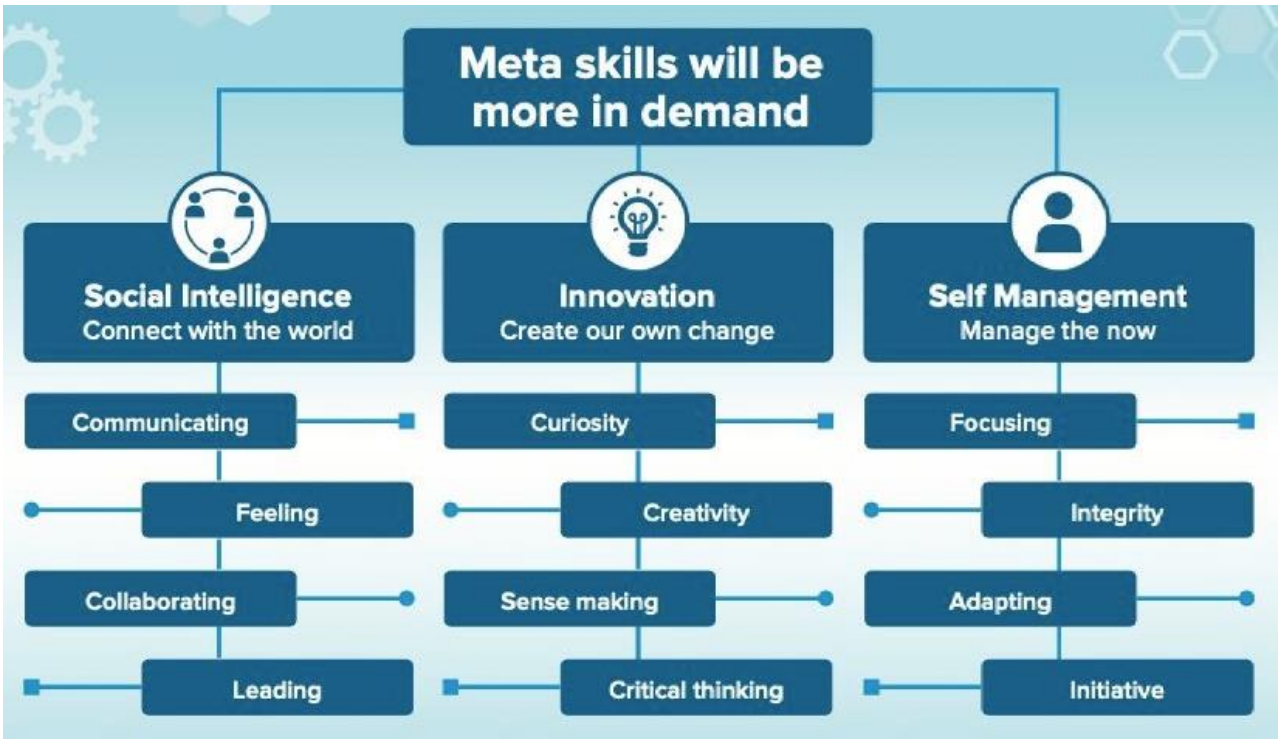
4.1 Career-Ready skills are those skills, other than specific vocational skills, in order to function successfully, individuals need skills in life, learning and work. UHI Perth defines these as:

a Core Skills.
b Digital Skills.
c Enterprise and Employability Skills.
d Sustainability Skills and Awareness.
e Global and Citizenship Skills.
f Career Management Skills.
g Health, Safety and Wellbeing.

Career-Ready Skills or Meta-Skills as defined by SDS, are classified under three main headings and pillars:

1 **Self-Management:** Manage the now. Required to cope with ongoing change and support wellbeing, growth and ultimately performance and productivity.
2 **Social Intelligence:** Connect with the world. Digital Technology has allowed society to connect globally in new ways and will continue to make positive change and we recognise that we can do this more effectively with others.
3 **Innovation:** Create our own change. The need to make sure our students have the skills and capabilities to create change themselves, rather than let change happen to them.

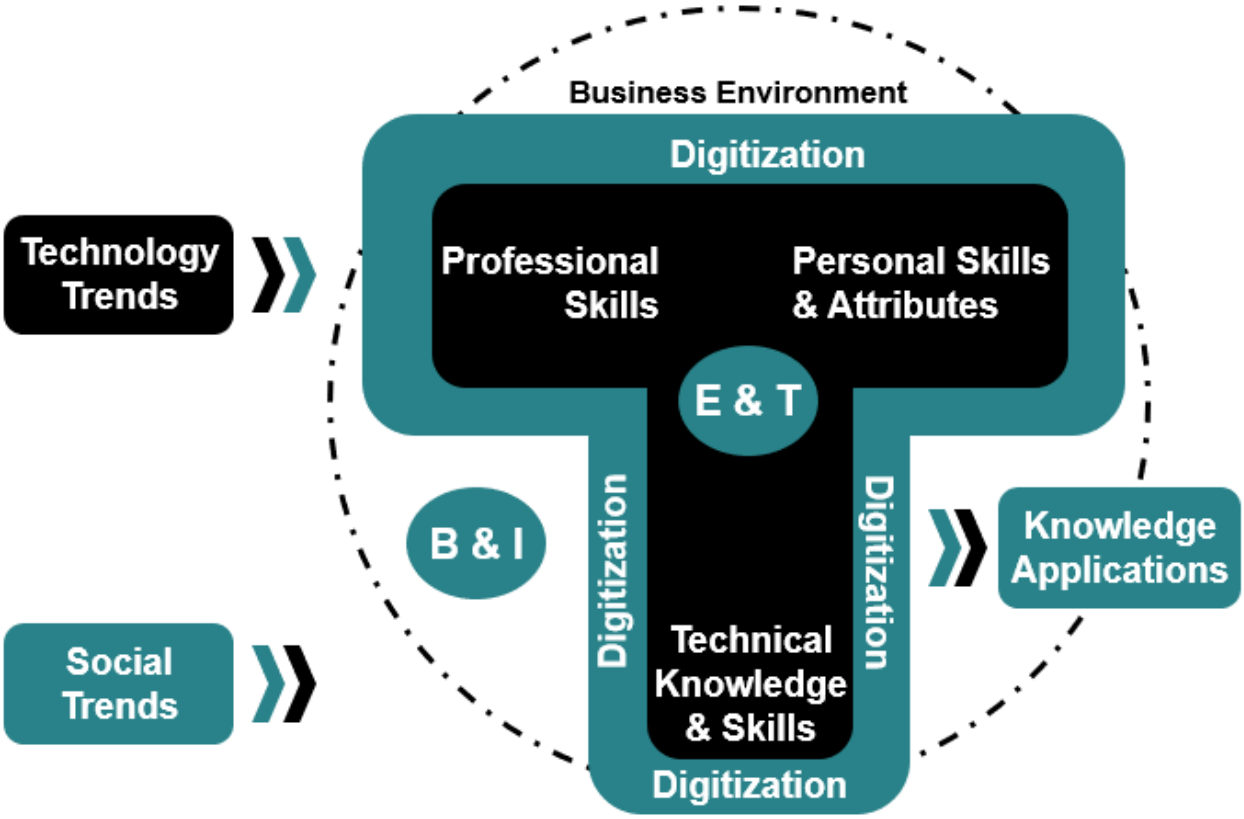
Timeless, higher order skill that create adaptive learners, promote success and support the development of additional skills and promote success in whatever context the future brings, these are shown below:



Career skills are the sum of your professional knowledge, skills, and experience. They determine how successful you are in making decisions, influencing outcomes, effecting change and doing a good job. These broad Career-Ready skills encompass many individual skills, traits and attributes. Different Career-Ready will take precedence in different vocational areas. Curriculum teams should also create a matrix/summary of where they incorporate these skills within their courses at various SCQF Levels

5 Developing the T-Shaped Work Ready Individual

5.1 T-Shaped skills refer to a special type of qualities that make an employee valuable. A T-Shaped individual possesses excellent knowledge of and skills in specific areas and is good at working with others in a collaborative way.



5.2 The T-Shaped Learning model meets the demand for the T-Shaped Work Ready Individual by integrating three core stands of learning into a cross cutting curriculum (and potentially co-curricular) framework covering:

- Technical knowledge and experience – largely discipline specific and defined by the sector; and including “know-how”, those good, practical skills, but importantly also “know-why”, a sound understanding of the theory behind the practice.

- Transferable professional skills – including business acumen, and the skills related to knowledge transfer and innovation.

- Transferable personal qualities – including enterprise and initiative, behaviours and attitudes – some of which are seemingly nebulous characteristics.

5.3 Developed together these three elements enable an individual to perform well in their chosen career/industry and to work across discipline/expertise boundaries. Industry and business now seek individuals with abilities and attributes in two broad areas – technical understanding and enabling skills.

5.4 The first of these comprises a sound knowledge of disciplinary fundamentals; a strong grasp of principles; creativity and innovation; together with the ability to apply theory in practice.

The second is the set of abilities that enable graduates to work effectively in a business environment: communication skills; teamworking skills; and business awareness of the implications of business decisions and investments. It is this combination of understanding and skills that underpins the role that graduates now play in the business world, a role with three distinct, if interrelated, elements: that of the technical specialist imbued with expert knowledge; that of the integrator able to operate across boundaries in complex environments; and that of the change agent providing the creativity, innovation, and leadership necessary to meet new challenges.

6 Key Principles

6.1 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 University will always seek to give students accreditation for any Core Skills units they have achieved prior to attending the University and will follow the SQA Policy on Accreditation to Prior Learning (APL) for Core Skills.

SQA Course Framework Documents, the SQA Core Skills Catalogue, National Occupational Standards (NOS) documents, mapping tools, matrixes will be referenced to identify where Core Skills are mandatory or optional; what levels of Core Skills are required for programmes at each SCQF level; and whether Core Skills are embedded or should be integrated.

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, Personal Academic Tutor (PAT) and the student.

The majority of FT FE programmes have an identified level required at entry and exit points for the five Core Skills. Students enrolling at UHI Perth with a Core Skills profile which indicates that they have already achieved the required exit unit(s) for their course of study will be given the opportunity to undertake relevant, alternative units/activities to extend their learning opportunities, understanding and knowledge.

Those students who may have difficulty in attaining the minimum level of Core Skills attainment required for their programme, may be offered a range of

learning support measures including additional support material; 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.

6.2 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.

6.3 Equality of Opportunity

Development of Core Skills is a whole university responsibility and available to every student in line with Equality, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.

6.4 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.

6.5 Quality

A range of delivery models is considered (discrete, contextualised, integrated, cross-assessed, and embedded) and Course Teams consult and work 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 of more than two weeks, behavioural issues and attainment concerns on a regular basis and levelling of units for individual and cohorts of students.

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 FE courses of study and onto 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.

7 Responsibilities

7.1 Vice Principal, Academic

As the senior member of staff with responsibility for Learning and Teaching the Vice Principal, Academic holds overall responsibility for this Policy.

7.2 Sector Development Director, STEM

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

7.3 Sector Manager/Subject Leader

Will work with individuals and teams in the Curriculum Areas to ensure that the policy is implemented accordingly as well as ensuring that staff teaching Core Skills support the delivery and compliance with policy and process.

7.4 **Sector Manager**
Relevant Subject Area Sector Manager/Subject Leader of staff teaching Core Skills will support the delivery and compliance with policy and process.

7.5 **All Academic Staff Teaching Core Skills**
Have responsibility for the promotion and implementation of this policy.

7.6 **All Academic Staff – General**
Have responsibility to:

- Support the development and integration of Career-Ready Skills or Meta Skills
- Support students to exercise self-reflection as a key element in the development, recognition, and application of Career-Ready Skills or Meta Skills
- Engage in Career Long Professional Learning and development in order to maintain and enhance the highest levels of professional practice.
- Curriculum teams are responsible for ensuring that opportunities for the development of Career-Ready Skills and Meta Skills are maximised in their programme design, review, and self-evaluations.

7.7 **Responsibilities – General**
It is the responsibility of everyone in the college to create a positive environment for both students and staff to develop Essential Skills including Core Skills.

7.8 **Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development**
Has responsibility for the approval and review aspects of this policy and to ensure that the policy is posted on the website.

8 Linked Policies/Related Documents

- Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
- Evaluation, Monitoring and Planning Process

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**	**Embedded**	**Cross Assessed**
Outline	Groups are timetabled to attend formal classes in the Study Centre for a notional total of 34 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, effective, and efficient core skills units can be embedded within technical and vocational units delivered in group awards.	Where appropriate, tools of assessment are created jointly by Core Skills' specialist and the vocational specialist and delivered jointly.
Pros	• Easy to timetable. • Easy to track/monitor. • Facilitates transferability.	As for discrete, plus: • May provide greater motivation. • Can help to emphasise importance/relevance.	As for contextualised, plus: • Can foster greater shared practice and better relationships between teaching staff.	• Core skills units can be evidenced through the delivery of a technical unit. eg sustainability unit. • Efficient and effective delivery model. • Learners can achieve multiple	As for integrated, plus: • Learners can achieve multiple credits from one activity.

				credits from one activity. • Student workload and assessment burden dramatically reduced. • Easy to timetable. • East to track/ monitor students' progress and achievement. • Facilitates greater student engagement.	
Cons	• Can appear to be non-vocationally relevant. • Difficult to motivate certain groups.	• Resource intensive to establish. • Difficult to tailor levels appropriately. • Not possible for **all** components of **all** core skills. • Contingencies required.	• Resource intensive (team teaching). • Timetable challenges. • Contingencies required.	• Resource intensive at planning stage as evidence mapping matrix required. Once initially completed the resources required are minimal. • Not always possible for **all** core skills and SCQF levels.	• Resource intensive at planning stage – time. • Timetabling. • Marking.

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