

## Information sheet 022: Learning Support Roles and Qualifications

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It has been estimated that there are over 50,000 learning support and learning resource staff working in the FE sector in England, and learning support makes an important contribution to the retention, achievement and progression of many learners.

### Learning support roles

Learning support takes place in a range of settings across the whole of the lifelong learning sector. The following are some examples of activities that learning support practitioners might be asked to undertake:

- Adapt learning resources to meet the needs of learners
- Explain tasks and ideas clearly to a learner
- Scribe, read, translate or interpret learning materials
- Use question and answer to check and develop learning
- Provide encouragement, constructive feedback and appropriate praise for learners
- Complete records of work undertaken with learners
- Take part in planning and review meetings
- Contribute to learner reviews
- Assist learners in gaining access to resources that maximise their independence
- Assist learners to carry out evaluation activities
- Check that learning resources are suitable for each learner's needs
- Use specialist knowledge to contribute to identifying learner needs
- Use specialist knowledge and skills to support learners
- Communicate information about learners in relation to specialist area of expertise
- Use specialist knowledge and skills to contribute to curriculum development
- Use communication methods particular to needs of learner (for example Makaton or BSL)
- Provide supervision for a practical activity in specialist area
- Advise colleagues on adaptation of resources for learners with particular disabilities, for example dyslexia

### **National occupational standards (NOS)**

In the past, many different job titles have been given to those who carry out any of these learning support roles, with different expectations of what the job entails.

The introduction in 2008 of national occupational standards (NOS) for learning support practitioners has helped to define the role and gives recognition to the significant impact that this support role has on the quality of teaching and learning.

The NOS can be accessed at:

<http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/node/16996>

### **3) Introduction to the new qualifications**

Units of assessment have now been drawn up from the national occupational standards, and guidance is available for awarding institutions to develop appropriate qualifications. The full list of roles, the NOS and the units of assessment can be accessed in through the following link:

<http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/searchresults?qg=learning+support>

Currently the qualifications framework contains qualifications at levels 2 and 3. Literacy, language and numeracy is an important focus for all learning support practitioners, but the framework includes opportunities for practitioners to develop a specialism, either in one of the Skills for Life areas, or other areas, such as working with learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

The qualifications developed from the new standards aim to provide an initial training route for all learning support practitioners and support the professionalisation of the learning support practitioner workforce.

It should be noted that at this time there is no statutory requirement for those working in a support role to undertake these qualifications. However, the lifelong learning workforce has been instrumental in bringing about their introduction, and with the increasing professionalisation of the sector as a whole, it is likely that they will in future become a benchmark of quality learning provision. For more details go to the following link:

<http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/node/17224>

### **Generalist or specialist?**

All learning support practitioners:

- work directly with the learners
- work under the direction of the person(s) leading the learning
- promote learners' independence as well as contributing to achievement and progression

Many existing learning support practitioners work with a range of learners across a number of subjects, contexts and/or settings. Some, however, may be considered as specialists, offering expertise in one or more areas of specialism. This may relate to working with learners with a particular learning need, working in a particular subject area, or working in a particular context. It is therefore possible to take a qualification for a 'generalist' role or for a more specialist role.

### **The 'generalist' qualification**

This qualification to support practitioners in a more general role has now been developed by awarding bodies and includes mandatory and optional units (see page 3 for details). The choice of optional units helps to provide a flexible qualification which allows for the wide range and types of support that exist within the sector.

Currently awarding bodies are in the process of validating centres who wish to offer these latest qualifications. For the most up-to-date information on availability of courses, please contact the awarding bodies directly or visit their websites.

### **The 'specialist' qualifications**

*Supporting learners with literacy, language or numeracy needs:*

After consultation with the sector, a specialist pathway has now been developed for those supporting numeracy, literacy and ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages). Those practitioners who wish to specialise in supporting the numeracy, literacy and language needs of learners are advised to contact awarding bodies for availability of courses. Further details of this qualification can be found on page 5 of this document.

*Supporting learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities:*

LSIS are still consulting on this qualification and expect to make an announcement in April 2012.

### **What is the value of the qualification?**

A new framework for recognising and accrediting qualifications has been introduced to simplify the current system. All qualifications now fit into this framework which is called the Qualifications and Credit Framework (or the QCF). Every unit of every qualification will have a credit value (1 credit represents 10 hours of study) and a level (between Entry Level and Level 8).

There are three sizes of qualifications in the QCF:

- Awards (1 to 12 credits)
- Certificates (13 to 36 credits)
- Diplomas (37 credits or more)

The qualification type award, certificate or diploma represents the size of the qualification and not how difficult it is. Further information about the QCF can be found at

<http://qcf.skillsfundingagency.bis.gov.uk/qcf-funding/confirmationfunding/>

### Level 3 Certificate in Learning Support

The new generic qualification consists of 4 mandatory units with a value of 6 credits each. These must be completed by all course participants (24 credits). In addition to these mandatory units, everyone chooses from a range of optional units that have a combined value of 6 credits. So the credit value of the qualification is 30. Guided learning hours are set at 100-150.

The chart below introduces the different units that make up the qualification and gives details of the mandatory and optional unit titles. All unit titles are followed by the unit credit value and level:

### Level 3 Certificate in Learning Support

Mandatory Units	Credit Value	Level
Preparing to support learning	6	Level 2 or 3
Learning support in the lifelong learning context	6	Level 3
Learning Support principles	6	Level 3
Approaches to Learning	6	Level 3

Optional Units:	Credit Value	Level
Select from the following optional modules to make a total of 6 credits. These can be at Level 2 (It is also possible to take a further 6 credits)		
Equality and Diversity	6	3
Inclusive approaches to providing information*	1	2
Literacy language numeracy and ICT needs for work, education and life*	2	2
Managing behaviours in the learning environment	6	3
Practice-based investigation	6	3
Preparing for the mentoring role	3	3
Principles and practice of family learning	3	3
Providing learners with personal care support	3	3
Skills check and signposting for literacy, language, numeracy and ICT*	1	2

Supporting and promoting a responsive service*	1	2
Supporting learners in a subject or vocational area	6	3
Supporting the learning of 14-19 year olds	6	3
Using ICT to support learning	6	3

\*These optional units are also included in the Level 2 Award in Literacy, Language, Numeracy and ICT Awareness (see page 10). Those who have already achieved these units can transfer the credits into this qualification.

### Credit value of the qualification

Credits from mandatory units	Credits from optional units	Total credits*
24	6 or 12	30 or 36

\*A maximum of 12 credits can be at Level 2

### Course entry requirements

There are no entry requirements for this certificate, but there is an initial assessment of skills in English, mathematics and ICT so that course providers can ensure learners receive appropriate support in order to benefit fully from the programme.

### Learning support practice

Practice should provide experience of working with individuals and groups of learners for at least 30 hours. This may be achieved through a range of means which may include:

- Employed practice
- Voluntary practice
- Placements in a learning support role.

Practice will be assessed for a minimum of 3 hours on at least 3 occasions. The locations of learning support practice must enable trainee practitioners to meet the National Occupational Standards. The following guidelines should be followed:

- Learning support is directed by a person who is leading the learning
- The learning support practitioner has access to specialist expertise where relevant, which would include other learning support practitioners, teachers and those in a range of learner support roles
- The trainee is practising in a context that allows him/her to meet the standards that must be achieved within the qualification
- The learner and trainee are supported by a mentor.

It is also possible to take the first mandatory unit as a standalone unit. This 6 credit unit leads to the **Level 2 (or Level 3) Award in Learning Support** (30 guided learning hours).

### **Level 3 Certificate in Learning Support (literacy, language and numeracy)**

#### **Application of the professional standards**

LLUK (ceased operating in March 2011) developed an application of the National Occupational Standards (NOS) for learning support in order to support the development of this specialist qualification for learning support practitioners working to support learners with literacy, language and numeracy needs.

The application document details the knowledge, understanding and professional practice to be demonstrated by literacy, language and numeracy learning support practitioners. It provides the content for the level 3 Certificate in Learning Support (literacy, language, numeracy) and is mapped to course assessment.

#### **All units are mandatory**

This specialist qualification incorporates the four mandatory units listed for the generalist learning support certificate, but three of these will be contextualised for the area of literacy, language and numeracy. In addition there will be 2 further specialist mandatory units with a total credit value of 12 points at Level 3. All the mandatory units are set out in the chart below:

### **Level 3 Certificate in Learning Support (literacy, language and numeracy)**

Mandatory Units	Credit Value	Level
Preparing to support learning	6	2 or 3
Learning support in the lifelong learning context (literacy, language and numeracy)	6	3
Principles of learning support (literacy, language and numeracy)	6	3
Approaches to learning (literacy, language and numeracy)	6	3
Knowledge and understanding for supporting literacy and language	6	3
Knowledge and understanding for supporting numeracy	6	3

### **Credit value of the qualification**

Credits from mandatory units	Credits from optional units	Total credits
<b>36</b>	None	36*

\*A maximum of 6 credits can be at Level 2

### **Course entry requirements**

There is an entry requirement for those wishing to join a course leading to this qualification. Potential learning support trainees wishing to work in this specialist area will need to evidence level 2 personal skills in English and mathematics. These can be evidenced by qualifications in English and mathematics. It may be useful to refer to the lists of approved qualifications for evidencing personal skills in literacy and numeracy for teachers in the FE sector in England. These can be found on the IFL website at:

[http://www.ifl.ac.uk/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0004/25807/level-2-lit-num-april-09-2.pdf](http://www.ifl.ac.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0004/25807/level-2-lit-num-april-09-2.pdf)

### **Learning support practice**

Practice should provide experience of working with individuals and groups of learners.

- 40 hours of learning support practice should be undertaken to reflect the greater demands of working in the area of specialism
- At least 10 hours of learning support practice should be in the area of literacy and/or language
- At least 10 hours of learning support practice should be in the area of numeracy.
- It is recommended that the learning support practitioner has access to specialist expertise in the relevant area of the specialist pathway.

### **Assessment of learning support practice**

Assessment of practice should take place through observation on at least four occasions totalling four hours. All observations must be of the specialist role and must include at least

- one observation of learning support practice in literacy and/or language and
- one observation of learning support practice in numeracy.

These observations should be undertaken by specialists with appropriate subject expertise. Observations should be for at least 45 minutes on each occasion.

### **Guided learning hours**

150 hours.

### **Level 2 Award in Literacy, Language, Numeracy and ICT Awareness**

The Level 2 Award in Literacy, Language, Numeracy and ICT Awareness is designed for those who support or advise adults in a variety of situations. This qualification developed from the original 'Link Up' project and the first unit of the former Level 2 Certificate in Learner Support.

There are 4 units, each of which is transferable to the Certificate in Learning Support:

- Literacy, Language, Numeracy and ICT Needs for Work, Education and Life
- Skills Check and Signposting
- Inclusive Approaches to Providing Information

- Supporting and Promoting a Responsive Service

### **Course entry requirements**

There are no specific entry requirements for this certificate, but course providers will wish to ensure that course participants have literacy skills at an appropriate level in order to carry out course reading and writing requirements.

### **Career progression**

Opportunities for career progression within the area of learning support will be supported by accredited continuing professional development (CPD). Progression into other related roles or further training could be accessible through choice of optional units, some of which are shared with other frameworks, for example, the teacher qualification framework and family learning. Further opportunities will also exist through newly developed courses, such as the Foundation Degree 'Literacies for Life' which has recently been validated by Lancaster University.

### **Links to awarding organisation websites:**

Ascentis:	<a href="http://www.ascentis.co.uk">www.ascentis.co.uk</a>
CACHE:	<a href="http://www.cache.org.uk">www.cache.org.uk</a>
City and Guilds:	<a href="http://www.city-and-guilds.co.uk">www.city-and-guilds.co.uk</a>
Edexcel:	<a href="http://www.edexcel.org.uk">www.edexcel.org.uk</a>
Education Development International:	<a href="http://www.ediplc.com">www.ediplc.com</a>
OCR:	<a href="http://www.ocr.org.uk">www.ocr.org.uk</a>