INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

LEVEL 3

BTEC National

BTEC

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This teaching support guide will help you get started with your BTEC delivery. It includes:

- An overview on planning course delivery: Should I teach unit-by-unit? What resources will I need? How should I induct my learners?
- A comparison chart to show how the specification has changed, unit by unit
- Ideas for tracking learner progress
- A sample scheme of work
- Case studies from schools and colleges delivering BTEC
- Hints and tips on good practice
- A walk through the assessment process, including a sample assignment with learner work and grading
- Frequently asked questions

Teaching BTEC will give you the confidence to guide your learners through their BTEC course and achieve their highest grades.

Product code: BN025717

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Teaching BTEC

A PEARSON COMPANY

Websites
The websites used in this book were correct and up to date at the time of publication. It is essential for tutors to preview each website before using it in class so as to ensure that the URL is still accurate, relevant and appropriate. We suggest that tutors bookmark useful websites and consider enabling learners to access them through the centre's intranet.

Disclaimer
This material has been published on behalf of Edexcel and offers high-quality support for the delivery of Edexcel qualifications. This does not mean that the material is essential to achieve any Edexcel qualification, nor does it mean that it is the only suitable material available to support any Edexcel qualification. Edexcel material will not be used verbatim in setting any Edexcel examination or assessment.

Copies of official specifications for all Edexcel qualifications may be found on the Edexcel website: www.edexcel.com

Contents

Introduction

This publication supports your delivery of the BTEC Level 3 National Information Technology qualifications and should be read in conjunction with the published specification. It provides an overview of how the qualifications have changed, how the BTEC unit specifications should be used, and how best to deliver the course and assess your learners' progress.

These materials are not prescriptive. You may feel that the course can be delivered and assessed more effectively in a different way. This may be because of the way the qualification is organised within your centre or because a different approach suits your learners better, after taking into consideration their learning styles and prior learning. BTEC qualifications are designed to enable you to plan and deliver programmes that are dynamic and relevant to local needs.

Further information and support

For a complete guide to all support offered by Edexcel at every stage of your BTEC delivery, please refer to *BTEC Support*. This booklet is available in your Specification Pack.

What's new for BTEC

Edexcel has redeveloped its suite of BTEC Level 2 First and BTEC Level 3 National qualifications to ensure that they are aligned with the new Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF). Wherever possible the changes have been minimal and in all cases BTEC units have retained their key characteristics.

What is the Qualifications and Credit Framework?
The Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) is a system whereby credit is awarded for qualifications and units (small steps of learning). It enables learners to work towards qualifications at their own pace and along flexible routes.

All QCF units are published on the Register of Regulated Qualifications (RRQ). Every unit and qualification has a credit value indicating how much time it takes to complete and a level showing how difficult it is (ranging from Entry Level to Level 8). Learners are given a unique learner number (ULN) where their individual record of credit accumulation is logged. For more information see www.accreditedqualifications.org.uk

How does this affect the BTEC Level 3 National qualifications?
The new family of BTEC Nationals – which are all at Level 3 – is made up of four sizes of qualification: Certificates, Subsidiary Diplomas, Diplomas and Extended Diplomas. (Qualification names have changed during the revision of BTEC Nationals to meet the QCF structure – please see the table below to compare the new names to the old if you have taught BTEC before.)

The Certificate has been introduced as a new BTEC Level 3 National qualification, to be broadly equivalent to one AS Level. This increases flexibility and improves opportunities for co-teaching with A Levels and other qualification types. The BTEC Level 3 Certificate will be nested wherever possible in the corresponding BTEC Level 3 Subsidiary Diploma, and the BTEC Level 3 Diploma in the corresponding BTEC Level 3 Extended Diploma.

All BTEC Level 3 National qualifications (whether Certificates, Subsidiary Diplomas, Diplomas or Extended Diplomas) comprise a mix of units and these can be at different levels but the majority of units must be at the main level of the qualification: Level 3.

Rules of unit combination have been determined to show how learners can select and combine unit choices to achieve new BTEC Level 3 National qualifications (see the specification for the list of available units). In some cases, there will be mandatory units which all learners must take to achieve their qualification.

The overall grade for any BTEC qualification will be based on a table in the specification that converts pass, merit and distinction unit grades to points and then totals those points.

> For full information about these qualification types, rules of unit combination and grading, please see the specification.

New features for BTEC units
There are some new features common to all new BTEC units:
- credit value and guided learning hours (GLH)† are stated
- expanded guidance is given on delivery and assessment
- BTEC units now contain guidance and mapping to functional skills and personal, learning and thinking skills (PLTS) so you can embed learning for these skills
- outline learning plans give suggestions for unit delivery and assessment
- a programme of suggested assignments gives ideas for assignments that will cover the unit's grading criteria
- each unit suggests how you can link with employers.

This additional information is not meant to be prescriptive. A key feature of BTEC is that you can match your delivery of the qualifications to local needs and circumstances, and to the opportunities that present in your area to give a real vocational focus. For more information about BTEC units see page 22.

Functional skills
Functional skills have replaced key skills. These are a set of standards that establish a benchmark in English, mathematics and ICT. Functional skills are available from Entry Level to Level 2.

BTEC specifications now offer guidance on how these functional skills can be embedded in your delivery of each unit. Please note: functional skills can be tested while delivering a BTEC course but they are not an integral part of the qualification. They are designed to be assessed by externally set and marked tests.

Personal, learning and thinking skills (PLTS)
BTEC Level 3 National units offer guidance and signposting to help you develop learners' personal, learning and thinking skills. Along with functional skills, these are seen as key elements for success in learning, life and work. Please note that PLTS are not a compulsory or integral component of the BTEC Level 3 National, but should you wish to integrate your PLTS delivery with this qualification, we provide this guidance for you to do so.

The PLTS framework consists of six groups of skills:
- independent enquiry (IE)
- creative thinking (CT)
- reflective learning (RL)
- team working (TW)
- self-management (SM)
- effective participation (EP).

These have connected outcome statements (to view these visit www.qcda.org.uk).

Although each skill set is distinctive, they may be interconnected and any assignment or learning experience may explore one or more PLTS. BTEC Level 3 National qualifications offer the opportunity to cover PLTS, but in order for learners to recognise this coverage the PLTS would need to be made explicit at delivery. To record competence in PLTS effectively, use a tracking system that is linked to the PLTS references in the unit specifications.

WorkSkills
Edexcel has developed a range of WorkSkills qualifications at Entry 3, Level 1 and Level 2 that may also be studied alongside BTEC Level 3 Nationals. WorkSkills comprise a range of units that focus on personal development, work, social and domestic skills.

For more information on WorkSkills see www.edexcel.com/workskills

So, why choose BTEC?
BTECs are an established and highly successful alternative to general qualifications, suitable for a wide range of learners. As work-related qualifications, they are designed to accommodate the needs of employers as well as allowing progression to university.

BTECs provide a practical, real-world approach to learning alongside a theoretical background, giving learners the knowledge, understanding and skills that they need to prepare for employment. BTECs also provide career development opportunities for those already in work. They can be taken as well as, or instead of, GCSEs and A-levels in schools and colleges.

Comprising individual units, which can be built to form a qualification at a size that is suited to the learner, BTECs can be delivered as a full or part-time course. Each unit is assessed through the completion of assignments that are designed by you as tutor and call on a range of evidence types. Such flexibility enables you to deliver a qualification that is just right for your learners and your centre.

BTEC Level 3 National Qualifications			
	Certificate	Subsidiary Diploma	Diploma	Extended Diploma
Previous name	this is new	Award	Certificate	Diploma
Credits (minimum)	30	60	120	180
Guided learning hours (GLH)	180	360	720	1080
Broad equivalence	1 AS-Level	1 A-Level	2 A-Levels	3 A-Levels

†Guided learning hours (GLH): all the times when a member of staff (for example, tutor, trainer or facilitator) is present to give guidance ('contact time'). This includes lessons, lectures, tutorials and supervised study in, for example, learning resource centres and workshops. It also includes time spent with learners observing and assessing their work towards assignments.

Every BTEC unit contains an assessment and grading criteria grid. For the purpose of brevity, this will be referred to as the 'grading grid' / 'grading criteria' throughout this booklet. (In official terms assessment criteria are pass criteria; grading criteria are merit and distinction criteria.)

What's new for BTEC Level 3 Nationals in Information Technology

Units have been revised and updated so that they can be mapped to the Qualifications and Credit Framework. This table summarises the specification changes unit by unit. For a complete list of new units, including rules of combination and mandatory/optional unit status, please see the specification.

New units Number	New units Name	Old units Number	Old units Name	Mapping
Unit 1	Communication and Employability Skills for IT	Unit 1	Communication and Employability Skills for IT	F
Unit 2	Computer Systems	Unit 2	Computer Systems	F
Unit 3	Information Systems	Unit 3	Information Systems	F
Unit 4	Impact of the Use of IT on Business Systems	Unit 35	Impact of the Use of IT on Business Systems	
Unit 5	Managing Networks	Unit 22	Network Management	F
Unit 6	Software Design and Development	Unit 18	Principles of Software Design and Development	
Unit 7	Organisational Systems Security	Unit 15	Organisational Systems Security	P
Unit 8	e-Commerce	Unit 34	e-Commerce	P
Unit 9	Computer Networks	Unit 27	Principles of Computer Networks	
Unit 10	Communication Technologies	Unit 8	Communication Technologies	P
Unit 11	Systems Analysis and Design	Unit 7	IT Systems Analysis and Design	P
Unit 12	IT Technical Support	Unit 28	IT Technical Support	F
Unit 13	IT Systems Troubleshooting and Repair	Unit 29	IT Systems Troubleshooting and Repair	P
Unit 14	Event Driven Programming	Unit 20	Event Driven Programming	P
Unit 15	Object Oriented Programming	Unit 25	Object Oriented Programming	F
Unit 16	Procedural Programming			N

New units Number	New units Name	Old units Number	Old units Name	Mapping
Unit 17	Project Planning with IT	Unit 4	IT Project	
Unit 18	Database Design	Unit 5	Advanced Database Skills	
Unit 19	Computer Systems Architecture	Unit 9	Computer Architecture	
Unit 20	Client Side Customisation of Web Pages	Unit 10	Client Side Customisation of Web Pages	
Unit 21	Data Analysis and Design	Unit 11	Data Analysis and Design	
Unit 22	Developing Computer Games	Unit 12	Developing Computer Games	
Unit 23	Human Computer Interaction	Unit 13	Human Computer Interaction	P
Unit 24	Controlling Systems Using IT	Unit 14	Controlling Systems Using IT	F
Unit 25	Maintaining Computer Systems	Unit 16	Maintaining Computer Systems	F
Unit 26	Mathematics for IT Practitioners	Unit 17	Mathematics for IT Practitioners	P
Unit 27	Web Server Scripting	Unit 19	Web Server Scripting	P
Unit 28	Website Production	Unit 21	Website Production and Management	P
Unit 29	Installing and Upgrading Software	Unit 23	Installing and Upgrading Software	F
Unit 30	Digital Graphics	Unit 24	Digital Graphics and Computers	P
Unit 31	Computer Animation	Unit 26	Computer Animation	P
Unit 32	Networked Systems Security	Unit 30	Networked Systems Security	F
Unit 33	Exploring Business Activity	Unit 31	Exploring Business Activity (Business Import)	
Unit 34	Business Resources	Unit 32	Investigating Business Resources (Business Import)	P

KEY
P   Partial mapping (some topics from the old unit appear in the new unit)
F   Full mapping (topics in the old unit match the new unit exactly or almost exactly)
N   New unit

BTEC success stories

Marriotts School, Stevenage

Why did you choose to run this BTEC course?
The BTEC course was already in place when I joined the school. BTEC gives the learners confidence in what they are working towards, and gives them the self-confidence to attempt a task even if they are unsure about it.

What have you enjoyed most about the course as a tutor?
I like the structure and pace that the BTEC programme offers. As a tutor I can produce my own material in terms of tasks, and learners can work on the course at their own speed.

How has your teaching changed since you started to deliver it?
I have become more of a lecturer/facilitator rather than a teacher. I have pushed for independent learning and encourage the learners to research the work and produce the evidence themselves, rather than 'spoon-feeding' them. In classes, I introduce the lesson objective and give some background to the task and the evidence required. I then allow them to conduct their own research, but provide guidance when asked for help. I want the learners to leave school with the necessary skills to survive in FE or HE and not to return home after one term.

What changes have you observed in learners as they have progressed through the course?
My learners have become more interactive with each other and have gained confidence especially in discussion groups. They also feel more confident about what they are researching and will seek advice from each other and from me as tutor.

Can you give any examples of how your learners have progressed since embarking on a BTEC course?
Learners are showing great potential on the BTEC programme because of its design. They are really enjoying the research and learning about how IT fits in with industry. They can relate to the BTEC work as opposed to some of their other academic subjects.

South Staffordshire College

Why did you choose to run this BTEC course?
We chose to run the National Diploma Systems Support [*now combined with another pathway to become Networking and System Support*] route as we felt that the units offered were good for learners if they were going on to work in the industry. We offer the Higher National Diploma in IT and these units are a good 'feeder' into that programme, but also good progression from our Level 2 programme. We are offering a 'creative route' from September as we think those units will have appeal for female learners and will encourage them to embark on careers in computing.

What have you enjoyed most about the course as a tutor?
I have enjoyed the diversity of units and the ability to differentiate the assessment for different learners.

How has your teaching changed since you started to deliver it?
I use more of a range of teaching methods as some of the units lend themselves nicely to more practical areas. For example, for *Unit 7 Organisational Systems Security* I have used the film *Die Hard 4* as the basis for a lesson, giving a good range of areas to look at and using it as a lead into discussion, questions and answers. This has worked really well and I plan on doing the same next term.

What changes have you observed in learners as they have progressed through the course?
As learners progress through the course they become more confident and seem to mature. One major observation is that normally by the end of the first year, the learners check the grading criteria more often without being prompted, which is a good indication of their personal development.

Can you give any examples of how your learners have progressed since embarking on a BTEC course?
I have a small group of approximately five learners who are currently in their first year of the National Diploma [*now National Extended Diploma*]. They came to me from school with no qualifications, a lack of confidence and, in some cases, having suffered severe bullying at school. They started a BTEC First Diploma in IT last year and, along with some nurturing and lots of tutorial time, they completed this successfully and produced some really strong work. I encouraged them to carry on to the Level 3 programme and they are all doing really well; in fact one of the girls is achieving Distinction grades in all of her units and is even talking about being the first person in her family that will be going on to university – so a definite success story!

Getting started: planning course delivery

Good planning is the first step to successful BTEC delivery and assessment. It is the best way of making sure everything is in place and that your unit coverage is robust and achievable. This guide should help you get started.
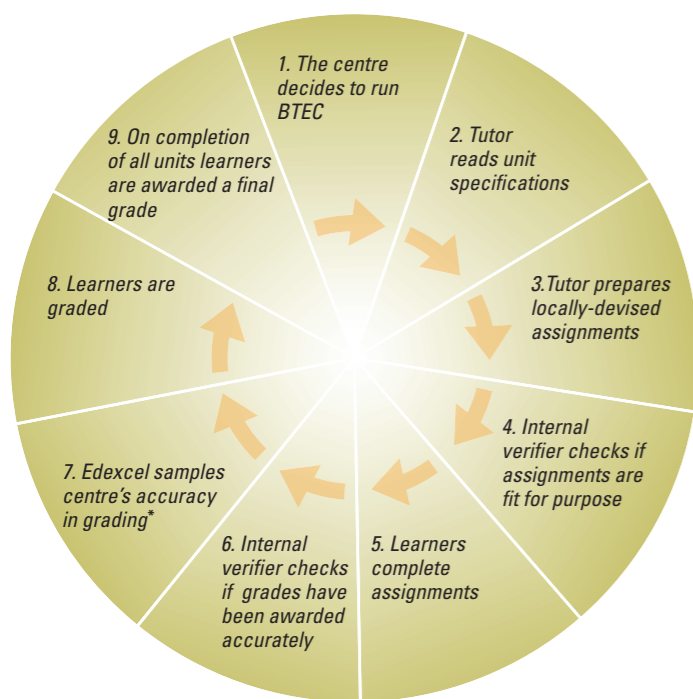
First things first
- Understand the structure of a BTEC unit (see page 22).
- Read and understand the specification.
- Decide whether you will teach unit by unit or if it is best to integrate unit delivery (for further guidance on this see page 16).
- Plan your programme of assignments (see page 34).

Key areas to consider
- Resource planning, such as when you might need to call on the expertise of specialist staff.
- Timetabling, practical lessons and enrichment opportunities.
- Interim and major assessment points.
- Planning for internal verification.

The BTEC assessment and delivery process

1. The centre decides to run BTEC
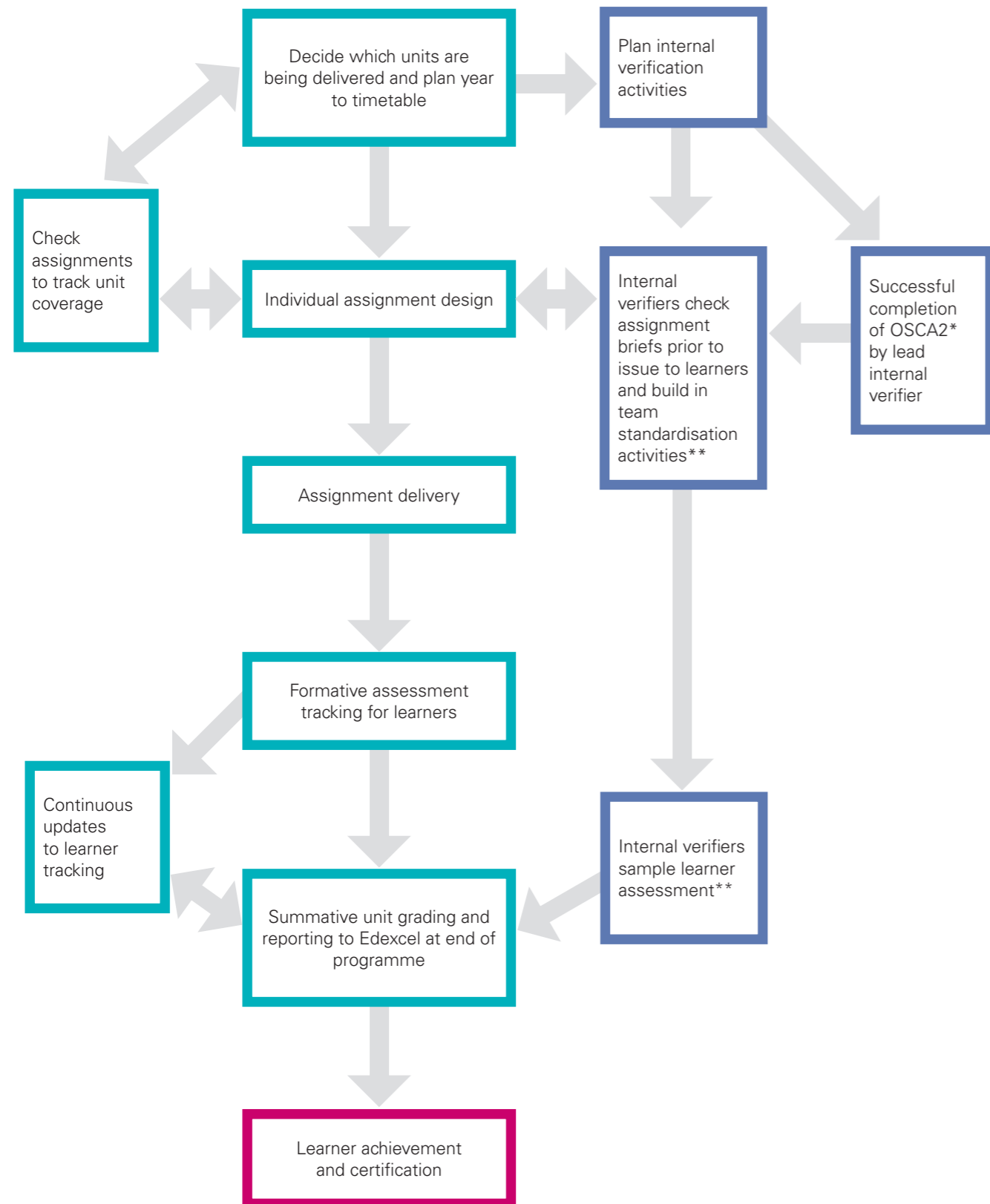2. Tutor reads unit specifications
3. Tutor prepares locally-devised assignments
4. Internal verifier checks if assignments are fit for purpose
5. Learners complete assignments
6. Internal verifier checks if grades have been awarded accurately
7. Edexcel samples centre's accuracy in grading*
8. Learners are graded
9. On completion of all units learners are awarded a final grade

*Lead internal verifiers who have passed the new OSCA2 test can seek certification of learner work for the programme(s) they manage without annual external sampling. (Some centres may be randomly sampled.)

Overview of roles and responsibilities

	Tutors/Assessors	Learners	Internal verifiers*	Programme managers/ Heads of department
Planning	Read the specification

Work with colleagues in their department, planning the course as a team

Design assignments which are suited to local and learner needs and matched to unit grading criteria

Action the internal verifier's advice on planning | Manage and organise their own time to prepare evidence for assignments | Support programme planning

Arrange standardisation meetings across teams and multi-sites

Ensure an effective system for recording learner achievement is in place

Advise programme team on any training needs | Manage the team to devise assessment programme in collaboration with tutors (assessors) and internal verifier(s)

Prepare resource plan to match assignment programme

Manage timetable and room allocation

Organise a tracking mechanism for learner achievement |
| **Implementing** | Deliver unit content and assignments

Guide learners towards approaches in gathering assessment evidence

Complete observation and witness statements to support demonstration of practical skills

Observe, scrutinise and record evidence of individual work within group activities

Review progress of learners to give opportunities for achieving grading criteria

Award unit grades when the unit has been completed and internally verified | Participate fully in the learning programme

Produce work for assessment | Provide advice and support to assessors on regular basis

Advise on opportunities for evidence generation and collection

Advise on the appropriateness of assessment evidence with regard to level, sufficiency, authenticity, validity and consistency

Advise on the interpretation of national standards and undertake standardisation exercise

Keep records of the verification process

Liaise with Edexcel assessment associate where appropriate | Take part in the programme

Monitor delivery

Organise regular team meetings

Coordinate tutor/assessor activity

Liaise with the internal verifier(s)

Deal with learner issues

Oversee maintenance of learner record |
| **Internal Verifying** | Action internal verifier's advice on assignment design

Check authenticity and sufficiency of assessment evidence produced against grading criteria/unit content

Record assessment decisions and put these forward for internal verification

Action internal verifier's advice on grading decisions | Check the validity and sufficiency of the evidence with the assessor

Review opportunities for achieving grading criteria

Participate in self- and peer-assessment activities where appropriate | Check if assignments are fit for purpose

Use their subject specialism to sample assignments to check the quality of assessment and to ensure that it is consistent, fair and reliable

Ensure own assessment decisions are sampled when teaching on the programme | Collaborate with internal verifier(s) to maintain the programme

Check the validity of overall verification programme

Coordinate awarding body requirements

Update internal verifier team on current practice

Respond to any awarding body action |
| **Feedback** | Give constructive feedback to learners and record learners' formative achievements

Provide guidance for learners to enhance achievement

Plan next steps with learners

Record learners' summative achievements | Receive assessment recommendations and feedback from the assessor

Plan next steps with the assessor | Give decisions and feedback on the sampling

Ensure appropriate corrective action is taken where necessary

Provide feedback on aspects of the assessment system to the programme team, senior management and Edexcel

Take part in the formal stages of any appeal | Coordinate and contribute to final internal awarding meetings

Oversee recording and transmission of accurate results

Review the course for the year with an end of year report including resource and teaching evaluation

Plan for the next academic year |

This is you

*Some of these functions may be undertaken by the lead internal verifier (see page 38)

Overview of year

Decide which units are being delivered and plan year to timetable

Plan internal verification activities

Check assignments to track unit coverage

Individual assignment design

Internal verifiers check assignment briefs prior to issue to learners and build in team standardisation activities**

Successful completion of OSCA2* by lead internal verifier

Assignment delivery

Formative assessment tracking for learners

Continuous updates to learner tracking

Internal verifiers sample learner assessment**

Summative unit grading and reporting to Edexcel at end of programme

Learner achievement and certification

*OSCA2 is the online standardisation test that would give a lead internal verifier, and consequently the programme(s) they manage, accredited status. With this status a lead internal verifier can seek certification of learners' work during the period of that accreditation without annual external sampling. (Some centres may be randomly sampled.)

**Where the centre has a lead internal verifier who has passed the OSCA2 test, this process is coordinated by them.

Learner induction

It is crucial that you familiarise your learners with how BTEC delivery and assessment work. Consider developing learners' understanding of:
- the specification (structure, content, grading grids, level of programme and equivalency)
- the purpose of assignment briefs
- the relationship between the tasks given in an assignment and the grading criteria
- the way that the BTEC grading grids work in relation to their prior experience of other assessment models
- internal assessment procedures and centre policies
- the concept of deadlines/hand-in dates
- the concept of vocational and work-related learning
- learner responsibility.

Progression

It is your duty to provide learners with clear guidance on progression and models of continued study that are relevant to their abilities. For more information on how learners might progress from a BTEC Level 3 National, see **www.btec.co.uk**

External links

All work-related programmes benefit from external links with the vocational sector. These links could be developed in many ways:
- provision of 'live' case study material that is company or organisation based
- learner visits to vocational settings
- professional input from practitioners, especially where vocational expertise is clearly identified in the delivery section of the units
- work placements that are specifically related to the qualification
- tutor placements to enhance vocational expertise
- regular use of vocational language and skills in class, in assignments and on work placement
- assignments set in a strong vocational context.

Edexcel's Study Skills Guides

Edexcel publishes free study guides for BTEC Level 3 National learners. These provide guidance on:

- self-assessment of strengths so learners can identify the best way for them to learn
- time management
- getting the most from work experience and special events
- working with others
- finding and using resources
- organising, interpreting and presenting information
- making presentations
- tackling assignments (including a worked assignment from a learner perspective).
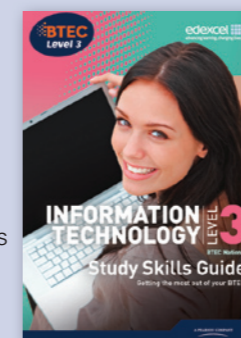
Forging links with local businesses

Since most businesses incorporate information technology to a greater or lesser degree, there is a broad spectrum of IT information and experience upon which learners may draw. From fast food outlets to international computing companies, most local businesses have something to offer, and many are happy to do so.

Some organisations are willing to provide simple projects as practical work for units such as *Unit 15 Object Oriented Programming* and *Unit 18 Database Design*. Other organisations may provide speakers or opportunities for visits. They are also a useful source of case studies or inspiration for assignment scenarios.

Employers may be willing to pass on copies of trade journals and catalogues to assist learners with research on items such as electronic components and current commercial practice. Journals and magazines from professional bodies such as BCS – The Chartered Institute for IT (previously The British Computer Society) and IMIS (Institute for the Management of Information Systems) also offer current practice articles.

Keeping up to date

Learners should be encouraged to read articles in appropriate trade magazines, other relevant IT trade journals and journals of professional bodies.

Visits to local organisations and visiting speakers from those organisations can make a large contribution to keeping up with current practice in the discipline.

The internet is also a great source of information on current thought in the commercial use and development of IT.

Linking theory and practice

Learners need to understand how to apply theoretical technical knowledge in practice.

The use of video to record a learner's practical performance, and subsequently to feed back to the individual learner and their peers is a very useful delivery (and assessment) technique within the sector.

A complete record of practical experience made in this way can provide excellent evidence for learner assessment, and for feedback on how their performance can be improved. You can use this for all practical activities, including those relating to hardware (e.g. installing components) or software (e.g. programming), or for other areas such as interviews (e.g. systems analysis).

Good teaching practice and resources

Staffing

All staff must be appropriately qualified to teach this course. It is ideal if tutors delivering the BTEC Level 3 Nationals in Information Technology also have relevant vocational experience. Tutors should have subject-specific knowledge for the unit(s) that they deliver.

It is advisable that, as part of your continuous professional development, you spend some time in a work placement to ensure you keep up-to-date with developments in the IT sector. This is particularly important if your particular specialism is not directly related to IT. BTEC National qualifications should be as exciting and engaging as possible and learners will benefit from tutors who are able to teach areas of IT with up-to-date practical experience of working in the sector.

Familiarity with current professional practice

It is important to have knowledge of current professional practice in order to set standards within each specialist area of the discipline. It is a feature of the design of BTEC qualifications that they have the flexibility to respond to National Occupational Standards in each area as current practice changes. They also offer the opportunity for innovative approaches to teaching and learning.

It is vital that tutors keep as up-to-date as possible with developments in the sector, since these occur frequently. IT is a broad field and it is difficult to keep ahead of all aspects of the discipline, but you should be aware of advancements and progress in as many areas as possible, developing and maintaining detailed knowledge of a few major subject areas.

It is advisable that, as part of your continuous professional development, you spend some time in contact with organisations which have up-to-date developments and implementations within the IT sector. Consider undertaking a planned series of visits to observe the development of a particular project, or perhaps attend a placement within a live project on a part-time basis.

Of equal value might be a situation where an organisation presents you with a small project to develop with your learners, under the control and direction of the organisation, but managed by you as tutor.

Extensive use of the internet and of trade publications is a very useful additional method of keeping up-to-date. You could also consider enrolling on proprietary courses, but they may prove costly.

It is vital that knowledge of current practices forms part of the design of assignments.

Additional specialist practitioners

You may have to employ specialist practitioners to deliver certain units of the Level 3 National courses. Take care that legal requirements are met. Where external tutors are delivering units, the internal verifier should carry out close monitoring to help ensure the quality of the assessment process.

Awareness of learners requiring reasonable adjustment

Be aware of individual requirements and ensure that learners can achieve the unit grading criteria in all of the units that the planned programme contains. You are free to make adjustments to programme delivery to ensure that learners can be guaranteed to gain the qualification if they comply with all unit grading demands (see more information about reasonable adjustment in the panel below).

Learning resources

A range of current resource material to support the programme is essential, for example visits, textbooks, videos, magazines, journals, other publications and access to websites.

Sufficient resources to meet the number of learners

Your centre signs a commitment to ensure adequate provision as part of the approval process. This must be adhered to in all cases so that learners are guaranteed the very best provision a centre can provide. Ongoing Edexcel quality assurance processes will check that the centre has sufficient resources to support the delivery of the programme, and that the centre has made provision to meet any specialist resource requirements at the approval stage.

Where resources are shared, carefully assess, plan and determine the access demands of all programmes within your subject area.

Teaching space

Learners at Level 3 will need extensive access to computers, a variety of software and the internet and it would be extremely beneficial if they have a base room which provides all of these facilities. Such a room could also allow the display of appropriate posters and leaflets, together with access at any time to resources, such as trade publications.

In some units more specialist facilities are needed for working on the practical hardware aspects of computer systems and communications. A room with all the facilities, appropriate to the selected units, should be made available. Where this may be a problem, the unit should not be selected.

Tutorials, individual learning plans and individual study time

If you are able to offer additional access or time allocated to independent learning, this will enhance your learners' development and enable achievement at merit and distinction levels.

Staffed Learning Resource Centres can be a great asset to learners, and access to such facilities outside the normal delivery periods can be vital to learner development.

You will need to track each learner's progress and spend at least one session per term on a one-to-one basis so you can see if any difficulties are arising with assignments and progress, and adjust deadlines as appropriate.

Health, safety and environmental issues in classrooms, IT laboratories and off-site visits

- Learners need to be made aware that IT, especially when involving working on hardware, is potentially dangerous, and safety should be at the forefront of their activities.
- Learners need to be made aware that they, as individuals, must take personal responsibility for health and safety.
- Centres must ensure that risk assessments for all activities, sites and classrooms are undertaken prior to the commencement of study, and any concerns reported.
- When negotiating site visits with local employers or voluntary providers, tutors need to ensure that suitable insurance arrangements are in place.
- Tutors must follow their institution's guidelines on external visits with full authorisation.
- Tutors must also be mindful of local practice and regulations within the site they are visiting.

Awareness of legislation within vocational practice

Make learners aware of any relevant legislation for vocational practice, where learners may endanger themselves or others if they do not know and understand what is required. Be sure that you are aware of any new or pending legislation that could impact on practice. Legislation falls into three major areas:

- that which deals exclusively with using computers (e.g. Computer Misuse Act 1990)
- that which deals with keeping and maintaining information (e.g. Data Protection Act 1998)
- more general legislation associated with employment, trading, etc.

Learners need to be fully familiar with legislation in the first point above and with anything in the second point (most especially the Data Protection Act) which directly relates, in part or in full, to the use of IT. They should be made aware of any legislation in the third point which may impact on particular areas of IT which they are studying.

Planning unit delivery

BTEC qualifications are designed to be flexible in their delivery and assessment, giving you the opportunity to construct and deliver programmes to suit your resources and learners. There are two main methods for approaching BTEC delivery: single unit delivery or integrated delivery.

Selecting the right units

- Look to the specification for information on which units are mandatory and which are optional.
- Consider which units your centre is best equipped to deliver (consider staffing, expertise and resources).
- Selecting optional units which grab learners' attention can help with both retention and achievement.
- Try to select units which reflect local needs and job markets. Many learners will try to go on to Higher Education, but for the others an awareness of local recruitment needs is vital for their progression.
- A similar case can be made for awareness of national trends in recruitment and how this might affect the selection of optional units.

Single unit delivery

BTEC qualifications comprise individual units that represent clusters of learning outcomes. For many sectors, a unit-by-unit approach to delivery is a valid and appropriate method for meeting the learning outcomes and delivering the unit content within the specification. Vocational applications of knowledge gained through unit-by-unit assignments allow learners to reflect on their practice, resulting in focused and in-depth evaluations.

This is probably the best form of delivery for centres that are new to, or inexperienced in, delivering BTEC programmes. It is also a useful method of delivery for learners who are not proficient at working on more than one unit and is particularly helpful at the start of the programme.

The BTEC Level 3 Nationals in Information Technology are best delivered in this way, via completely separate units, (with some being delivered in parallel, yet totally separate from any other unit). This allows tutors and learners to focus on single specific units and to complete a full unit within a specified timescale.

Sometimes, if the selection of units is diverse then this is the only method by which the work can be realistically undertaken. The initial decisions to be made when embarking on this programme are:
- Who will deliver the unit?
- Who will assess the unit?
- The order in which the units will be delivered.
- 'Short and fat' or 'long and thin'?

The usual procedure is that the person delivering the unit will also be the person assessing the unit, but this need not necessarily be the case. Centres may recruit a specialist to deliver various aspects of the topic, but they will also need their own teaching staff, who are experienced in BTEC, to assess the evidence. In units with a high practical content, centres may use an experienced technician to deliver or supervise that part, but again they will need their own teaching staff to assess the work.

The order in which to deliver the units is very much down to the personal preference of the teaching staff, the availability of resources and the interests of the learners. Delivery in strict numerical order is often not the best method and, while Unit 1 may be regarded as a foundation unit, it may well not be the best unit with which to start. Grabbing the learners' attention with the first unit they attempt is vital and, while most units can be made interesting by using innovative delivery techniques, very often it is something very practical (e.g. spreadsheets, programming, web or networking) which makes a good starting point.

'Short and fat' or 'long and thin' is very often restricted by the timetable. It refers to setting delivery and assessment goals of a term or less ('short and fat') or allowing delivery and collection of evidence to take place over a couple of terms or even a whole academic year ('long and thin'). Where more flexibility is possible, some units lend themselves to long, thin delivery, a classic example being Unit 1 where evidence needs to be collected over a period of time, and where setting specific short-term assignments can be extremely tricky. While this unit can be delivered 'short and fat' it does relate more closely to the 'long and thin' scenario.

Although the single unit delivery method is somewhat more straightforward than an integrated approach, centres should not neglect the planning and preparation needed to deliver units successfully. Having made these initial decisions the next steps are to:
- plan the distribution of unit delivery throughout the whole course
- plan a programme of assessments
- plan internal verification.

Integration of units

For some sectors, however, it is essential that learners know how the content covered by several units interrelates, as it would in the world of work. In these sectors, unit delivery is best integrated, with assignment evidence mapped across two or more units. Integrated delivery is one of the distinct strengths of BTEC qualifications and can lead to a deeper practical and vocational understanding of the content.

Although integration is not an absolute requirement, many of the units for BTEC Level 3 Nationals in Information Technology integrate well and it is therefore sensible that attempts are made to deliver and assess based on related content across units. Where possible, it is good practice to try to create links between units.

Use your knowledge of the unit content to identify topics which may be logically associated for delivering and assessing.

Schemes of work and assignments can be developed along lines of logical association across units. Anything which doesn't fit into this format reverts to being treated like a single unit, or partial single unit.

This approach takes more detailed planning than the single unit delivery approach, and involves more people since all tutors and assessors for the topics involved must have an input into the delivery and assessment. Clear divisions must be drawn up between different areas of the subject matter to ensure that no topic is delivered twice or missed altogether. Most importantly, one person must take responsibility for coordinating the recording and reviewing of criteria awarded to each learner. It is not safe to leave this to individual tutors with no overall coordination.

Having resolved these points, you should carry out your planning in much the same way as for single unit delivery. The major difference in terms of timing will be that the integration, even partial integration, of units will change the elapsed times of delivery which will need careful calculation for timetabling. You cannot apply the 'long and thin' or 'short and fat' division in the same way as for single unit delivery.

For information on how to design assignments that cover one or more units see page 34. Information on tracking single/integrated delivery can be found on page 21. Information on how units link to one another can be found in the specification.

Theory should always underpin practice

Learners should be given practical opportunities to apply the knowledge and understanding that they have gained in the classroom.

They should also be encouraged to give examples of practical IT applications when answering assessment questions.

Referencing and writing styles

Encourage learners to adopt formal referencing in their work, so that they are able to return to useful sources. By the end of the programme referencing should be a matter of course for learners, so that they are well prepared for progression on to higher programmes for which referencing may be mandatory. In addition, encourage learners to develop the skill of writing in the third person, past tense, as expected for scientific reports.

Presentations and teamwork

At an early stage in the programme, encourage learners to make presentations to other members of the class, and ensure that learners work in groups as frequently as possible. Group presentations are an effective method of involving learners in the delivery of the qualification while simultaneously providing assessment opportunities. For instance, if the unit content requires learners to be aware of a wide range of examples, this could be achieved by small sub-groups researching different topics and reporting back to the main group, with their presentations and slides forming the assessment evidence. These are very important PLTS skills, which the BTEC programmes have been successful in developing, and which will certainly prove of benefit in the world of work and in higher education or further vocational programmes.

A word of caution: learners must be given the opportunity to individually provide evidence for the award of criteria. The design and development of group work should always be mindful of this requirement.

A suggested course structure

The tables below provide suggestions only as to how you might choose to structure the course. Refer to the specification to check other optional units available and to view rules of unit combination. It is key that you make unit choices that are relevant and appropriate to your own learners and centre resources.

BTEC Level 3 Nationals qualifications in Information Technology are available along the following pathways:
• 'Unattributed'
• Business
• Networking and Systems Support
• Software Development.

These represent discrete qualifications, but share the majority of units, so there is a great deal of scope for co-teaching groups. The specification gives rules of unit combination for each pathway.

BTEC Level 3 Certificate in Information Technology (30 credits):
Two mandatory units, plus optional units that provide for a combined total of 30 credits (where at least 16 credits must be at Level 3 or above).

Year 1		
Term 1	Term 2	Term 3
Unit 1: Communication and Employability Skills for IT (10 credits, mandatory)		Unit 6: Software Design and Development (10 credits, optional)
Unit 2: Computer Systems (10 credits, mandatory)		

BTEC Level 3 Subsidiary Diploma in Information Technology (60 credits):
Two mandatory units, plus optional units that provide for a combined total of 60 credits (where at least 31 credits must be at Level 3 or above).

Year 1		
Term 1	Term 2	Term 3
Unit 1: Communication and Employability Skills for IT (10 credits, mandatory)		Unit 6: Software Design and Development (10 credits, optional)
Unit 2: Computer Systems (10 credits, mandatory)		
Year 2		
Term 4	Term 5	Term 6
Unit 42: Advanced Spreadsheet Skills (10 credits, specialist)	Unit 14: Event Driven Programming (10 credits, optional)	Unit 18: Data Base Skills (10 credits, mandatory)

BTEC Level 3 Diploma in Information Technology (Software Development) (120 credits):
Four mandatory units, plus optional units that provide for a combined total of 120 credits (where at least 61 credits must be at Level 3 or above).

Year 1		
Term 1	Term 2	Term 3
Unit 1: Communication and Employability Skills for IT (10 credits, mandatory)		Unit 42: Advanced Spreadsheet Skills (10 credits, specialist)
Unit 2: Computer Systems (10 credits, mandatory)		Unit 14: Event Driven Programming (10 credits, optional)
Unit 6: Software Design and Development (10 credits, mandatory)		
Unit 3: Information Systems (10 credits, mandatory)		
Year 2		
Term 4	Term 5	Term 6
Unit 21: Data Analysis and Design (10 credits, optional)	Unit 28: Website Production and Management (10 credits, optional)	Unit 29 Installing and Upgrading Software (10 credits, optional)
Unit 15: Object Oriented Programming (10 credits, optional)	Unit 27: Web Server Scripting (10 credits, optional)	Unit 31: Computer Animation (10 credits, optional)

BTEC Level 3 Extended Diploma in Information Technology (Software Development) (180 credits):
Six mandatory units, plus optional units that provide for a combined total of 180 credits (where at least 91 credits must be at Level 3 or above).

Year 1		
Term 1	Term 2	Term 3
Unit 1: Communication and Employability Skills for IT (10 credits, mandatory)		Unit 21: Data Analysis and Design (10 credits, optional)
Unit 2: Computer systems (10 credits, mandatory)		
Unit 6: Software Design and Development (10 credits, mandatory)	Unit 3: Information Systems (10 credits, mandatory)	Unit 15: Object Oriented Programming (10 credits, optional)
Unit 14: Event Driven Programming (10 credits, mandatory)	Unit 42: Advanced Spreadsheet Skills (10 credits, specialist)	Unit 29 Installing and Upgrading Software (10 credits, optional)
Year 2		
Term 4	Term 5	Term 6
Unit 28: Website Production and Management (10 credits, optional)	Unit 11: Systems Analysis and Design (10 credits, mandatory)	Unit 31: Computer Animation (10 credits, mandatory)
Unit 27: Web Server Scripting (10 credits, optional)	Unit 30: Digital Graphics and Computers (10 credits, optional)	Unit 37: 2D Animation Production (10 credits, specialist)
Unit 20: Client Side Customisation of Web Pages (10 credits, optional)	Unit 35: Digital Graphics for Interactive Media (10 credits, specialist)	Unit 8: E-commerce (10 credits, optional)

Note: For most BTEC Level 3 Nationals in Information Technology, there is no requirement that mandatory units should be delivered first (as is the case in some other sectors).

Note that in the structures above:
• Unit 1 is run over two terms to allow learners time to gather sufficient information for the various practical activities such as creating and maintaining a personal development plan (PDP).
• The units taken in the first year will generally provide sufficient evidence for the lower qualification should learners be unable to finish the planned course.

Keeping track

Whatever decisions you make about your programme delivery, it is important that you carefully map the assessment of criteria across units and keep accurate records to track learner achievement. Tracking sheets like those shown opposite can be constructed easily in Word or Excel. The ones opposite are available on the CD-ROM in your Specification Pack.

Systematically track all of your assignments at grading criterion level so that you build a full and complete achievement record for every learner. This is especially important in differentiated learning or in special circumstances such as illness where all assignments may not be carried out. In these cases, full unit coverage can sometimes be achieved through cross-reference with other related units; however, evidence provided by learners must fully cover the criteria.

Many centres are making use of virtual learning environments (VLEs) such as Blackboard or Moodle that allow tutors to maintain individual learner sites and keep work electronically. You may decide to give parents access so that they too can check learner progress and achievement. This kind of service will help parents to understand how BTECs are assessed.

Suggested learner tracking sheet

Learner name	Unit name													Unit name											
	P1	P2	P3	P4	M1	M2	M3	M4	D1	D2	D3	D4	P1	P2	P3	P4	M1	M2	M3	M4	D1	D2	D3	D4	

Suggested assignment tracking sheet
(for integrated unit delivery, with different tutors delivering each unit)

Assignment name	Unit name													Unit name											
	Tutor name													Tutor name											
	P1	P2	P3	P4	M1	M2	M3	M4	D1	D2	D3	D4	P1	P2	P3	P4	M1	M2	M3	M4	D1	D2	D3	D4

BTEC units: a quick overview

Every BTEC unit is structured in exactly the same way, and this structure has been developed to facilitate your delivery of the course. The notes here give a quick overview. For full details of this structure please see the specification.

Title page
The first page of the specification gives the unit title, QCF level, the credit value and the guided learning hours (GLH)* It also sets out the unit aim and purpose, the unit introduction and the learning outcomes.

*Guided learning hours: all the times when a member of staff (for example tutor, trainer or facilitator) is present to give guidance.

Unit content
Lists the breadth of knowledge, skills and understanding needed to achieve each of the learning outcomes. This outlines what you should cover in your delivery and what your learners need to know.

Assessment and grading criteria grid
The evidence that each learner must produce to achieve pass, merit or distinction. **This is the most important section of each unit** – units must be taught and assessed by these criteria (not the learning outcomes).

Essential guidance for tutors
Unit-specific guidance on delivery and assessment.

Outline learning plan
This suggests **one way** you could deliver the unit. Design your own learning plan to mirror your preferred delivery and assessment methods for unit coverage. (This will be crucial where a more integrated delivery profile is adopted.)

Programme of suggested assignments
For guidance only, this table lists ideas for assignments that would cover the grading criteria. It is recommended that you write your own assignments or adapt Edexcel's to meet local needs and resources. Remember: all assignments must be internally verified by your centre before issue to learners to ensure they are fit for purpose.

Indicative reading, resources packs and websites
Suggested learner resource material.

Links to National Occupational Standards, other BTEC units and BTEC qualifications
Shows opportunities for integrated delivery of units.

Functional skills signposting
Opportunities to generate evidence to meet the requirements of functional skills tests.

Developing a scheme of work

All BTEC Level 3 National units are structured in a way that should facilitate your delivery of the course. Each unit includes an **outline learning plan**. This is provided as an **example only** to illustrate just one way you might deliver that unit. This plan includes suggested assignments that will cover the unit's grading criteria.

From this outline learning plan you might then develop a more detailed scheme of work. To show how this might be done, the outline learning plan opposite is taken from *Unit 1 Communication and employability skills for IT*. An example of a scheme of work for this unit is given on pages 26–31.

Design your own scheme of work to factor in the needs of your learners and local resources, and to reflect the assignments that you have designed for the unit.

Delivery notes

The **introductory session** could be delivered using practical activities. For example, when explaining what constitutes appropriate evidence for an assignment, learners could work in groups to identify the various methods for themselves. (For more information on assignment evidence, see page 34.)

Always try to **make your teaching as learner-centred as possible,** and apply it to the use of IT in organisations, making the scenarios as realistic as possible.

Visiting speakers are able to give the topics covered a sense of realism for learners. The programme team should endeavour to forge links with local organisations which can give valuable input by providing guest speakers. Such organisations may also be a possible source of work experience opportunities. A guest speaker should be briefed regarding the intended audience and a lesson plan should be prepared with them, with clear learning objectives so that learners may gain maximum benefit from the experience.

When learners are working on their assignments, advise them to **remain focused on providing evidence that is relevant and fulfils the grading criteria**. It is helpful to demonstrate a 'model answer' to the tasks of an assignment. Giving learners guidance regarding the volume of work expected can be useful if given in terms of scope of content. Things like suggested word counts for written tasks are not particularly helpful since this will depend on the varied writing skills of the learners, some of whom can express themselves more succinctly than others.

Learners should **understand how continuous assessment** works in terms of interim and formative assessment. All learners should submit interim work or show you where they are with their assignments so that you can feed back on how well they are meeting the tasks against the criteria that they are working towards. If a learner has already met the pass criteria, you should indicate how the learner can achieve merit and distinction grades. If the pass criteria are not yet met, indicate what the learner has to do to get to the appropriate standard.

Group work

Group work is vitally important on BTEC programmes and you should provide opportunities for group work frequently throughout the course. Remember, however, that if any group work contributes towards an assignment, individual learners must be able to provide evidence that they have individually met the criteria.

Looking out for plagiarism

Be careful with the use of the internet – unfortunately the copying and pasting of text into assignments is happening with alarming regularity. Even at this level, a plagiarism policy may be required to encourage learners to reference the work of others as far as possible. See www.jcq.org.uk for advice on detecting plagiarism. On the first assignment make sure that any cut and paste evidence is rejected and learners are made to do the work in their own words. This will pay dividends in the long run.

How do I cover the unit content?

- Work closely with the specification document to ensure that you fully understand the coverage for each learning outcome within each unit.
- Check your content coverage against the grading criteria.
- Make sure that you understand the distinction between content that must be covered (known as prescriptive content) and content that is optional (known as indicative content).
- Indicative content includes topics listed after 'eg' in the specification – here tutors may use these examples or replace them with relevant alternatives of their own choice. This gives you the opportunity to include items which have been developed since the publication of the specification.
- Rather than following the assignment ideas in the specification, it may be possible for you to consider smaller assignments over shorter periods of time which will keep your learners engaged. Remember that your assignments must always be designed for **your** learners.
- Use a tracking sheet to plan your assignments and cross check to see if all content is covered. See page 21 for examples of tracking sheets.

Outline learning plan for Unit 1: Communication and Employability Skills for IT

Topic and suggested assignments/activities
Introduction to the unit
Valued attributes: – whole-class exercise – specific job-related attributes   – whole-class exercise – general attributes   – individual exercise – what attitudes are valued by employers?   – whole-class exercise – tutor presentation on organisational aims and objectives
Assignment 1 – Attributes and barriers
Effective communication: – whole-class exercise – tutor presentation on general communication skills   – directed research – effective communication: interpersonal skills   – individual exercise – effective communication: in writing
Assignment 2 – Effective communication
Communicating via IT: – whole-class exercise – tutor presentation on different channels for communication   – whole-class exercise – what software helps communication?   – individual exercise – tools for improving communication through ICT
Assignment 3 – Personal development
Identifying personal development needs: – whole-class exercise – tutor presentation on what personal development is   – whole-class exercise – identifying personal development needs   – individual exercise – personal development: records   – individual exercise – personal development: addressing needs   – individual exercise – personal development: learning styles

Sample scheme of work for *Unit 1 Communication and Employability Skills for IT*

Some adjustments have been made in developing this scheme of work from the unit's outline learning plan. Consider giving learners the opportunity to start their personal development plans (PDPs) as early as possible to allow time for them to be maintained and reviewed for assessment purposes (Assignment 3). Similarly, time may be required to gather together evidence of effective communication; hence the assignment for this should be as late as possible (Assignment 2).

Session	Teaching topic	Time allocated*	Linked assessment	Core content and delivery methods	Resource checklist
1	Introduction and overview of the unit	1 hr	P1	Tutor presentation using a handout showing the unit specification and with reference to Edexcel's website Tutor presentation explaining what an attribute is and giving examples Class split into four groups to discuss the meaning of the four sub-groups of attributes using a worksheet to record observations	Presentation introducing the unit Handout – unit specification Worksheet for groups to record their observations
2	Attributes – what do they mean and why are they valued	3 hrs	P1	Tutor presentation explaining what an attribute is and giving examples Class split into groups to name the various attributes and discuss their meaning using a worksheet to record observations and examples Class discussion to record each groups findings on a master sheet Class divide their findings into the four sub-group areas (job-related, general, attitude, aims and objectives) Tutor presentation on how attributes are important to employers, using examples Class in three groups consider the importance of some examples of each sub-group of attributes Whole-class discussions to amalgamate findings on the importance of selected attributes	Handout with example attributes by sub-group Worksheet for groups to record their observations Electronic master sheet to record findings and split into sub-groups Presentation on importance of attributes Worksheet (electronic) for each sub-group and for merged information Video conferencing to add interest to some discussions
3	How attributes relate to what employers want	2 hrs		Tutor presentation using example job specification for which learners identify specific attributes and the reasons why they are important Learners individually look at a job specification and identify related attributes and their importance Tutor-led feedback session	Presentation and example job specification Job specifications for each learner (a group so that not every learner gets the same specification, but more than one learner gets each specification)
4	Introduction to Assignment 1	3 hrs	P1	Tutor goes through Assignment 1 scenario and admin Introduction to Task 1 covering criterion P1 Instructions Time allocation to start Task 1	Assignment
5	Introduction to the principles of effective communication	2 hrs	P2	Tutor-led discussions on principles and general communication skills Learners in groups discuss awareness and use of different aspects of principles and general skills (see unit content) Role play to develop an understanding of how to adapt to using these skills Learners make notes for their own use	Checklist of points to be included Role-play scenarios
6	Barriers to effective communication	2 hrs	PP3/M1	Tutor presentation on various barriers to communication using handouts Group discussions on how it might be possible to reduce impact of barriers Whole-class feedback and tutor-led discussions	Handouts on barriers
7	Complete Assignment 1	4 hrs	P1/P2/P3/M1	Time to complete the assignment covering P1, P2 and M2, including feedback	Assignment

Guided learning hours (GLH): all the times when a member of staff (for example tutor, trainer or facilitator) is present to give guidance ('contact time'). This includes lessons, lectures, tutorials and supervised study in, for example, learning resource centres and workshops. It also includes time spent with learners observing and assessing their work towards assignments.

Session	Teaching topic	Time allocated*	Linked assessment	Core content and delivery methods	Resource checklist
8	Introduction to personal development plans	4 hrs	P7/P8/D2	Tutor presentation on creating a PDP using an example Tutor presentation on identifying own needs by self-assessment Exercises on drawing up a PDP for a specific scenario Feedback and whole-class discussion on the exercise Tutor presentation on reviewing and maintaining a PDP Exercise on maintaining a PDP based on case studies	Example PDP Presentations Scenarios and case studies for learner exercises
9	Assignment 3: Task 1 – create a PDP	2 hrs (including time to review and maintain)	P7/P8/D2	Learners create a PDP based around their needs for this unit. Learners review and maintain their PDP at various stages throughout the unit	Assignment 3
10	Interpersonal skills	2.5 hrs	P4	Individual directed research using the internet on the description and meaning of various terms used in interpersonal skills Role-play activities to recognise good and less good points about interpersonal skills Tutor-led whole-class feedback and discussion to clarify any ambiguities	Research instructions Role plays
11	Presentations as interpersonal skills	4 hrs	P4	Tutor demonstrations of presentation software (e.g. PowerPoint) Individual short presentation exercises, presented by individuals to the rest of the class Presentations by small groups to whole class Peer assessment of the presentations Tutor-led feedback Start to identify and collect evidence which can be used for interpersonal skills in Assignment 2	Short presentations either complete for delivery or topics for construction and delivery
12	Communicating in writing	4 hrs	P5/P6/M2	Tutor presentation on prescriptive aspects of writing as included in the unit content Tutor demonstrations as necessary of WP and email Practice exercises for writing in various styles and formats to produce newspaper columns, technical report, formal letter and email Tutor demonstrates the use of proofing tools (spell checker, grammar checker, thesaurus) Learner exercises in use of proofing tools In small groups consider articles and their relevance to a target audience Start to identify and collect evidence which can be used for written skills in Assignment 2	Presentation Demonstration material for WP and email Exercises in writing Demonstration material for proofing tools Exercises in use of proofing tools Exercises in relevancy
13	Reviewing documents and moving to final version	4 hrs	M2	Learners individually proofread a series of draft documents, in various states of readiness, and identify errors Tutor feeds back on standard answers to the exercises Learners review structure and relevance of sample documents designed for a variety of audiences Tutor feedback with standard answers Learners review a piece of their own work as an exercise	Draft documents which variously include errors in spelling, grammar, structure and relevance Standard answers
14	Summary of techniques used	2 hrs	D1	Tutor presentation with handouts listing techniques Individual learner exercise looking at a piece of written work and criticising the techniques used Tutor leads feedback session Watch video presentation and individually make notes on techniques used Feedback session led by tutor	Tutor presentation Handouts Written piece of several pages using several techniques Video of presentation, meeting or informal get together where several techniques are on view (could be one of the learners)

Guided learning hours (GLH): all the times when a member of staff (for example tutor, trainer or facilitator) is present to give guidance ('contact time'). This includes lessons, lectures, tutorials and supervised study in, for example, learning resource centres and workshops. It also includes time spent with learners observing and assessing their work towards assignments.

Session	Teaching topic	Time allocated*	Linked assessment	Core content and delivery methods	Resource checklist
15	Communicating using ICT	1.5 hrs	P5	Tutor demonstrations using web-based channels (it is assumed WP, presentation and email have already been covered) Learner exercises using web-based channels (blog, vlog, voip, etc)	Appropriate software Material for demonstration Exercises
16	Assignment 2	7 hrs	P4/P5/P6/M2/D1	Working on assignment Feedback	Assignment 2
17	Identifying personal development needs	2.5 hrs	P7/P8/D2	Building on the PDP work already being done from block 9 In groups look at example formal reports and records Tutor-led feedback In groups discuss case studies of addressing needs Tutor-led feedback	Formal reports (e.g. appraisal reports) and records Case studies
18	Learning styles	2.5 hrs	M3	Directed research on different learning styles systems Handouts for comparison of own work with standard definitions Tutor explains how to determine own learning style Individual exercises based on simple tests to determine own learning styles Tutor presentation on how knowledge of own learning style helps you to learn	Handouts Exercises to determine own learning style Presentation
19	Assignment 3	7 hrs	P7/P8/M3/D2	Assignment work Feedback	Assignment 3
	Total guided learning hours	**60 hours**			

Please note: the suggested timings are approximate, and the sessions could be broken down further.

Guided learning hours (GLH): all the times when a member of staff (for example tutor, trainer or facilitator) is present to give guidance ('contact time'). This includes lessons, lectures, tutorials and supervised study in, for example, learning resource centres and workshops. It also includes time spent with learners observing and assessing their work towards assignments.

Assessment and grading

Learners work through BTEC units by participating in the learning programme and tackling the assignments you set for them. The ultimate aims in the setting of assignments are to cover the grading criteria for each unit and to set learning within a vocational context. (Full guidance on assignment design can be found on page 34.)

Tell me more about assignments

The number of assignments for each unit will vary. It is up to you how you decide to cover the grading criteria for each unit. Take into account the ability of your cohort of learners, the requirements of the unit itself, local resources and not least your imagination as tutor.

There are drawbacks in setting both too few and too many assignments. If you set **too few** (by, say, adopting the one-off project approach), you can place too much reliance on large pieces of evidence that may only be available late in the programme. These large assignments can be hard to assess and difficult to put right if things go wrong.

By contrast, setting **too many** assignments can put a burden on both you and the learners. This can lead to fragmentation of the unit. The unit content, outcomes and grading criteria have generally been produced to provide a coherent package. As such, the assignments should, wherever possible, maintain the coherence and links between the outcomes and grading criteria of the unit.

Your assessment can be achieved through **differently paced** assignments to provide variation: some assessments can be designed for learners to complete within a short space of time, and others over the course of several weeks (or even a whole term).

Generally, it is good practice when designing assignments to look across the assessment criteria to identify 'themes' which can run together. Each assignment should then embrace one of these. The identification of such themes will dictate how many assignments are needed to fully assess the unit.

Kick-starting an assignment

The most successful assignments are those set in the context of a suitable practical or industry-based scenario. Sometimes, depending on the unit, this is quite difficult and the result may appear somewhat 'contrived' but it is worth putting the assessment in some form of context.

It is also possible for learners to use their work experience, part-time employment or voluntary work to generate evidence for their assignments (though it may prove difficult to obtain paid part-time employment in some sectors). Where learners have the opportunity to undertake any work experience, ensure that they are provided with suitable witness testimonies to capture any appropriate evidence (templates for witness testimonies can be found on page 37). (Your teaching programme should lead learners into each assignment.)

There are three recommended assignments for *Unit 1 Communication and Employability Skills for IT* in the unit's programme of suggested assignments and associated outline learning plan. The first assignment covers the criteria P1, P2, P3 and M1 and is mainly theoretical. If some learners are becoming de-motivated because of the nature of this assignment, then the tasks could be broken up or combined with those of a more practical nature.

It is good practice to provide learners with a list of assignment deadlines over the period of study. This will help them to manage their workload. The table below shows part of an example assignment plan (the table could be extended to cover two years).

	September	October	November	December	January
Unit 1	Assignment 1	Assignment 2			Assignment 7
Unit 2			Assignment 4		
Unit 3		Assignment 3		Assignment 6	
Unit 4			Assignment 5		

Engaging your learners

Learners can be engaged by ensuring that their initial assignments relate to a topic of particular interest.

Run practical units early on in the academic year, possibly in parallel with more theoretical unit(s). While *Unit 1 Communication and Employability Skills for IT* is a mandatory and fundamental unit for all courses, it may not be the best unit with which to start, unless coupled with something which contains more practical IT (e.g. spreadsheets, programming).

Building a portfolio of evidence

Learners should be encouraged to compile a portfolio of evidence to meet the grading criteria for each unit. It is worthwhile spending time developing these skills during the course induction period.

As we have seen with *Unit 1 Communication and Employability Skills for IT,* some units allow learners to acquire evidence from elsewhere over a period of time. It is quite useful in such cases for learners to gather all their evidence into a portfolio and at a later date make final selections of which to present.

What about grading?

Learners need to provide evidence to meet the grading criteria shown in the unit specification.
- To **pass** a unit, every pass criterion needs to be achieved.
- To gain a **merit**, all the pass and merit criteria need to be achieved.
- To gain a **distinction**, all the pass, merit and distinction criteria need to be achieved.

See the specification for further information on how unit grades are converted to points to calculate a learner's overall grade for the course. Learners who complete the unit but who do not meet all the pass criteria are graded 'unclassified'.

Each criterion generally begins with an operative verb, for example:

Pass = describe (what)
Merit = explain (how)
Distinction = justify/evaluate (why)

It is crucial that these same operative verbs are used in the wording of assignment tasks to yield correct evidence from the learner to meet each criterion.

Each assignment must cover all or part of a unit's grading criteria. This will be dependent on the nature and size of the individual assignment, and how it relates to the content of the unit (or units, if you are integrating unit delivery through assignments). See page 16 for more information.

Working towards merit and distinction criteria

As programmes progress, some learners may struggle to achieve the merit and distinction criteria. It is imperative that in giving assignment feedback, you clearly show all learners what they need to do to improve their grades and achieve the higher levels.

Not all learners will achieve the higher criteria, but there should be the opportunity for all to attempt this.

For full information on grading, please see the specification.

Tracking learner achievement

There is an example of a learner tracking grid on page 21. This type of grid enables you to keep a record of learners' progress during the course. If your unit delivery is integrated with other units, the grids facilitate your tracking of just which assignments have covered which grading criteria.

It is important to ensure that assessors, internal verifiers and external verifiers have easy access to learner evidence for each of the unit grading criteria. The evidence must be clearly referenced and annotated in each learner's portfolio.

Assignment design

Assignments must be designed to motivate learners, to allow learners to achieve specified unit grading criteria in vocational contexts, and must call on learners to produce varied forms of evidence.

When designing assignments it is possible to:
• have one assignment brief to assess all the grading criteria of a unit
• have two or more smaller assignment briefs for a unit
• allow assessment of criteria from one unit to be integrated with assessment of criteria from another unit.

> **The assignment brief must include:**
>
> • the title and level of the qualification
> • the title and number of unit(s) under assessment
> • the title of the assignment
> • the date the assignment is set (start date)
> • submission/assessment date(s)
> • the name of the assessor(s)
> • the name of the learner
> • space for the learner to sign to confirm the work is their own.
>
> In addition to this, the use of interim/milestone assessment dates is recommended – especially where assignments cover a number of criteria. It is essential that assignments have a suitable timescale.

The scenario
The assignment should be based within an **interesting vocational scenario** so that learning can be applied to the real world of work.

The tasks
Each assignment is divided into tasks – detailed descriptions of the activities learners will undertake in order to produce evidence to meet the unit's grading criteria and complete the assignment. Each task must:
• specify the extent and nature of evidence that learners should present
• be clear, specific, time-bound, stepped, relevant and realistic
• address the grading criteria it targets, paying careful attention to the operative verb of each criterion ('describe', 'explain', 'evaluate', etc.)
• reference the grading criteria it addresses
• be presented in learner-friendly, engaging and inspirational language, not simply repeating the grading criteria
• address the grading criteria in full, and not split a criterion across more than one assignment.

Evidence
Clearly state what learners are expected to provide as evidence for each task. Forms of evidence can include:
• recorded discussions
• log books/diaries
• artefacts

• presentations
• performance
• brochures/leaflets/posters
• case studies
• web-based material (websites, blogs, VLE, podcasts, etc)
• role plays
• reports/written investigations
• annotated photographs
• promotional material
• work-based evidence.
• audio/video evidence.

> For evidence that is not written, observation records or witness statements can be completed. See opposite for further information.

Assessment and grading criteria
• The assignment must state exactly which assessment and grading criteria are being addressed.
• Centres **must not** rewrite any aspect of the unit's assessment and grading criteria nor add their own centre-devised criteria.
• Centres may provide additional guidance, explaining criteria requirements in learner-friendly language, but the exact wording of the published criteria must appear on the assignment.
• An assignment can have one unit as the main focus, but learners may also be producing evidence towards other units at the same time.

Local needs
Assignment briefs should always be developed and adapted to meet the needs of learners at your centre and to take account of your centre's resources. They must also be checked by someone in your centre (internally verified) to ensure they are fit for purpose **before** they are given to learners (for more information on this see page 38).

The assignment brief will often need to be supplemented with further information, for example:
• a demonstration
• handouts
• videos or DVDs
• references to books
• references to websites
• visits to guest speakers such as local professionals, suppliers and contractors
• functional skills and/or personal, learning and thinking skills opportunities
• visits to related departments in the centre's own administrative processing department.

> An example of a fully worked assignment can be found on page 46.

Learner responsibility
Learners need to take responsibility for completing their assignments. Many centres have instigated learner agreements or contracts, which learners sign to commit themselves to meeting all deadlines and the other demands of completing their programme. Learners must produce assessment evidence that is all their own work. Plagiarism can be an issue; it is important that learners are instructed on the correct use of referencing. For more information, see Edexcel's *Centre Guide to Managing Quality: Policies, Procedures and Practice.*

> **Engage your learners**
>
> The most successful assignments will engage and excite learners to take responsibility for the progress of their own learning.

Observation records
An observation record is used to provide a formal record of an assessor's judgement of learner performance (for example, during presentations, practical activity, performance or role play) against the targeted grading criteria. The record:
• will relate directly to the grading criteria in the unit specification
• may confirm achievement or provide specific feedback
• will provide primary evidence of performance
• will be sufficiently detailed to enable others to make a judgement as to quality and whether there is sufficient evidence of performance.

Observation records should be accompanied by supporting additional evidence. This may take the form of visual aids, video or audio tapes, CDs, photographs, handouts, preparation notes, cue cards, diary records, log books and/or peer assessment records. Observation records should also:
• note how effectively these were used to meet the assessment criteria
• record the assessor's comments
• be evidenced in a learner's portfolio when assessment is carried out through observation, together with relevant supporting evidence
• be completed by the assessor who must have direct knowledge of the specification to enable an assessment decision to be made
• be signed and dated by the assessor.

An observation record can have greater validity than a witness statement since it is capable of directly recording an assessment decision without reference to others.

Witness statements
A witness statement is used to provide a written record of learner performance (process evidence) against grading criteria. Someone other than the assessor of the qualification/unit may complete it. This may be an assessor of a different qualification or unit, a work placement supervisor, a technician, a learning resources manager or anyone else who has witnessed the performance of the learner against given assessment criteria. It can be someone who does not have direct knowledge of the qualification, unit or assessment criteria as a whole but who is able to make a professional judgement about the performance of the learner in the given situation.

The quality of a witness statement is greatly improved and enables the assessor to judge the standard and validity of performance against the assessment criteria if:
• the witness is provided with clear guidance on the desirable characteristics required for successful performance by including a checklist
• the grading criteria are present on the witness testimony (this may need further amplification for a non-assessor)
• the witness also provides a statement of the context within which the evidence is set.

The witness statement does not confer an assessment decision. The assessor must:
• consider all the information in the witness statement
• note the relevant professional skills of the witness to make a judgement of performance
• review supporting evidence when making an assessment decision
• review the statement with the learner to enable a greater degree of confidence in the evidence
• be convinced that the evidence presented by the witness statement is valid, sufficient and authentic.

When a number of witnesses are providing testimonies:
• every witness testimony should be signed and dated by the witness
• information of their job role/relationship with the learner should also be available.

These details add to the validity and authenticity of the testimony and the statements made in it. Centres should note that witness testimonies can form a vital part of the evidence for a unit(s) but they should not form the main or majority assessment of the unit(s).

> Templates for observation records and witness statements are given on pages 36 and 37 and can be modified to show a centre's own logo. These are available in Word format on the CD-ROM in your Specification Pack.

Observation record (by tutor)

Learner name

Qualification

Unit number and title

Description of activity undertaken (please be as specific as possible)

Assessment and grading criteria

How the activity meets the requirements of the assessment and grading criteria

Assessor signature | **Date**

Assessor name

Witness statement (by external observer)

Learner name

Qualification

Unit number and title

Description of activity undertaken (please be as specific as possible)

Assessment and grading criteria

How the activity meets the requirements of the assessment and grading criteria, including how and where the activity took place

Witness name | **Job role**

Witness signature | **Date**

Assessor name

Assessor signature | **Date**

Internal verification of assignment briefs

Internal verification is a quality assurance system you must use to monitor assessment practice and decisions. It is there to ensure that:
- assessment and grading are consistent across the programme
- assignment briefs are fit for purpose
- assessment decisions accurately match learner work (evidence) to the unit assessment and grading criteria
- standardisation is a feature of centre assessment practice.

Prior to each brief being issued to learners, a tutor who understands BTEC Level 3 National in Information Technology units must carry out internal verification. Some centres may not employ an additional experienced tutor with BTEC IT expertise; if this is the case, it is perfectly acceptable to invite a colleague from a related BTEC subject area to assist IT tutors to scrutinise each brief as part of the internal verification process. The verification procedure is undertaken to ensure that:
- the tasks and evidence will allow the learner to address the targeted criteria
- the assignment brief is designed using clear and accessible language
- learners' roles and tasks are vocationally relevant and appropriate to the level of the qualification
- equal opportunities are incorporated.

The system used to do this is a matter for individual centres. Edexcel fully supports the use of the centre's own quality assurance systems if they ensure robust internal standardisation.

Internal verification of assignment briefs should always be reported and recorded. If action is required, the assessor should complete this and return the form to the internal verifier for sign off. Once the assignment is verified as fit for purpose, it may be issued to the learners.

Internal verifiers are advised to use the paperwork that is available in the CD-ROM in the Specification Pack as this meets all Edexcel requirements. See the example on page 48.

Internal verification is to be seen as a supportive process. If an assignment is not fit for purpose, the internal verifier should return the assignment with appropriate comments. There should be a deadline set for the amendments to be made and, when all is approved, the documents should be signed and dated to give the team an auditable document. Tutors can engage in professional discussions where there is disagreement so that all standards and decisions are shared and understood.
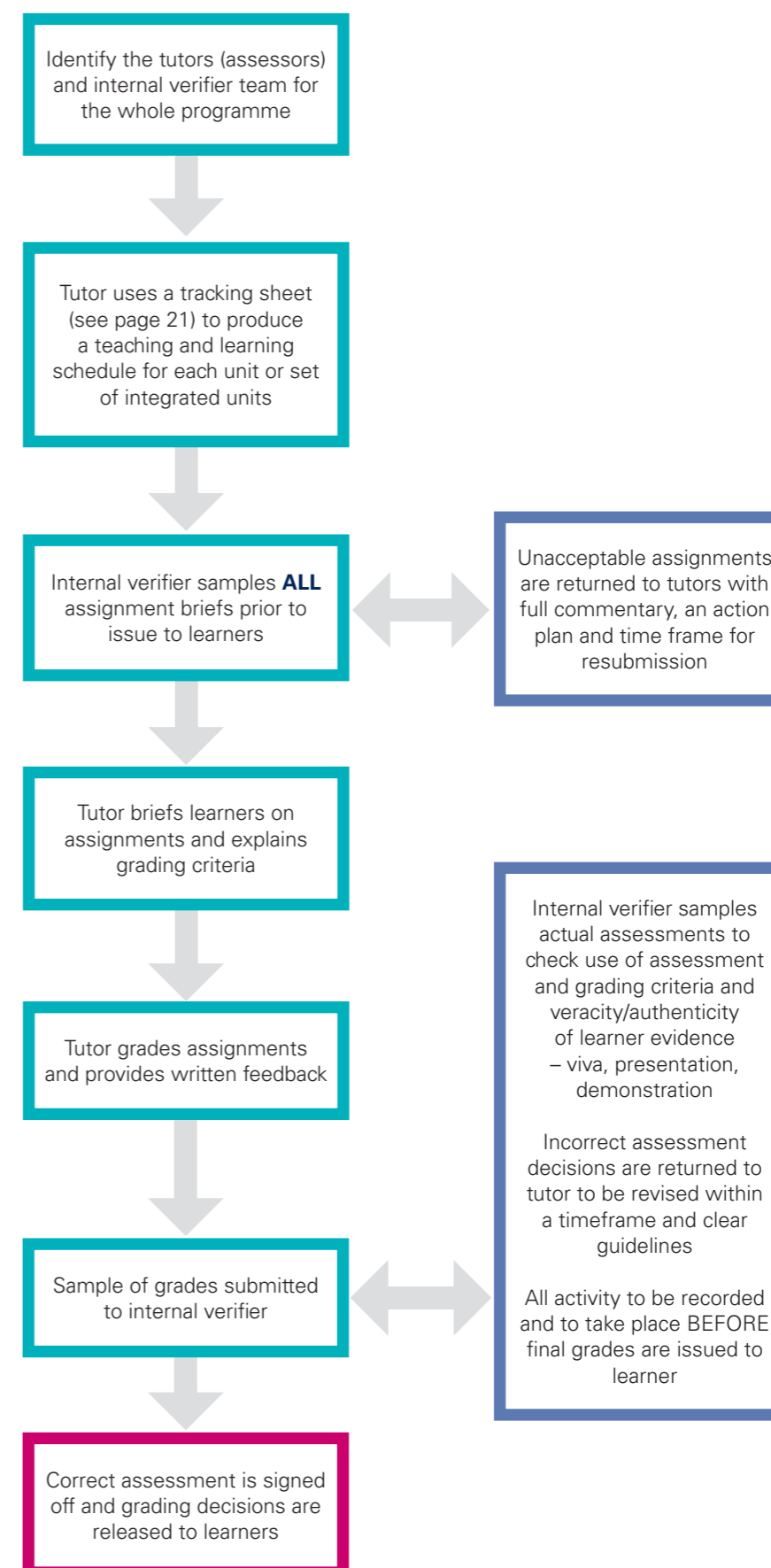
For an example of a worked assignment with internal verification forms see page 44.

Lead internal verifiers (new from 2010)

Each centre's group of programmes has a lead internal verifier who coordinates the work of other internal verifiers and offers leadership on issues of internal standardisation and related training. The lead internal verifier will be expected to gain accreditation via the Edexcel online OSCA2 test. The achievement of this test will permit release and certification of learner attainment. For more information on becoming a lead internal verifier, see **www.btec.co.uk**

(Some programmes may be subject to annual sampling prior to release and certification of learner attainment.)

Procedure for internal verification

Identify the tutors (assessors) and internal verifier team for the whole programme

↓

Tutor uses a tracking sheet (see page 21) to produce a teaching and learning schedule for each unit or set of integrated units

↓

Internal verifier samples **ALL** assignment briefs prior to issue to learners ⟷ Unacceptable assignments are returned to tutors with full commentary, an action plan and time frame for resubmission

↓

Tutor briefs learners on assignments and explains grading criteria

↓

Tutor grades assignments and provides written feedback

Internal verifier samples actual assessments to check use of assessment and grading criteria and veracity/authenticity of learner evidence – viva, presentation, demonstration

Incorrect assessment decisions are returned to tutor to be revised within a timeframe and clear guidelines

↓

Sample of grades submitted to internal verifier ⟷ All activity to be recorded and to take place BEFORE final grades are issued to learner

↓

Correct assessment is signed off and grading decisions are released to learners

Grading an assignment

When designing an assignment, it is key that you set the level of expectation for learners and provide guidance related to the kinds of evidence that they should be producing. Assignments will not, ideally, require a uniform response, otherwise you will have difficulty in assessing across the range of grading criteria – differentiated learning would be constrained. Learners should have the freedom to develop their own responses within the demands of the learning outcomes and grading criteria.

When grading an assignment it is good practice to use a form such as that shown on the CD-ROM in your Specification Pack. Alternatively, you can devise your own assessment record sheets but these should always allow feedback to learners on their performance against the criteria. It is also good practice to have space for learners to comment on their own work. It is important to give learners positive feedback that tracks and records their learning journey and achievement but also identifies areas for improvement. This is very valuable for learners who have missed criteria and need further encouragement and direction to achieve these criteria.

Learners normally receive feedback after each assignment has been assessed and internally verified.

Maximising learner achievement

Unit grades need not be submitted to Edexcel until the centre wishes to claim certification. Learners should have every opportunity to obtain the best unit grades they are able to achieve.

Learners could be encouraged to tackle criteria that they have missed, or are weaker in understanding and achieving via newly designed assignments. Mini assignments, or a second opportunity to meet the criteria in a fresh way, is good educational practice. Newly designed assignment briefs must be internally verified before issue to learners.

Key points

- **Always use the specification document** and cross reference learner evidence to the learning outcomes, unit content and the unit's assessment and grading grid to ensure that the criteria specified in the assignment are fully met. For merit and distinction grades, the decisions should not be based on quantity of evidence presented but on its quality (in meeting the criteria).

- **The guidance section of each unit specification will assist you** in reaching a decision. Delivery teams will find that standardisation prior to major unit assessment will be very useful in setting the standard of individual assessors' decisions. Use of a sample of learner work across the grade boundaries, especially if there are 'cusp' decisions, is the best way to set the team standard. This activity builds confidence among the assessor team. A post-standardisation session can be very useful for further discussions on the quality and standard of the work that has been assessed and it provides an opportunity for internal verification to take place before grading decisions are confirmed to learners.

- **Good feedback can identify the way that learners can achieve a higher grade** and positive feedback will assist learners who may be diffident about gaining more than a pass grade, which is a common problem with learners who are only prepared to do the bare minimum to pass. Assessors can encourage learner self-esteem and confidence by setting clear expectations. The feedback section can also provide learners with an individual learning plan, giving clear targets for completion, dates and deadlines.

Improving grades

In general, BTEC units expect a gradual improvement in grades over the progress of the course as learners become more familiar with the degree of independence and self-responsibility that is required to meet the higher grading criteria.

Internal verification of assessor's comments

Once assignments have been graded, the internal verifier should sample these to ensure that the assessor is:
- conducting assessment in a fair and equable way
- using the specification document
- using grading criteria
- checking the veracity and authenticity of learner evidence through vivas, presentations, demonstrations etc.

Centre teams can hold standardisation sessions to establish the veracity and accuracy of the team's assessment decisions.

Any incorrect assessment decisions will be returned to assessors to be revised within a timeframe. Where the internal verifier deems the assessment decisions to be invalid, there must be dialogue between assessor and internal verifier to discuss the issues raised. This dialogue should be documented on the internal verification form together with the action to be taken and the resulting grading outcome. There must be a clear audit trail of the closing of the 'quality loop'.

All activity should be recorded and should take place before final grades are issued to learners.

Frequently asked questions

How many assignments should there be?

As many as are necessary to assess the unit. Determine the most appropriate assessment strategy for the unit, taking into account the ability of your cohort of learners, the requirements of the unit, local resources and your imagination as tutor.

If you set too few assignments (by, say, adopting the one-off project approach) you can place too much reliance on large pieces of evidence that may only be available late in the programme. These large assignments can be hard to assess and difficult to put right if things go wrong.

By contrast, setting too many assignments puts a burden on both you and the learners. This can lead to fragmentation of the unit. The unit content, outcomes and grading criteria have generally been produced to provide a coherent package. As such, the assignments should, wherever possible, maintain the coherence and links between the outcomes and grading criteria of the unit.

When should assignments be set?

There are two issues when considering timing. First, be aware of the possibility of assessment overload – when there is a bunching of assignment deadlines across a number of units at any point in the programme. To avoid overload, detailed planning needs to take place at programme level to spread the assessment load. Second, there is the issue of identifying the most appropriate place within the unit for the assignment. This will be determined by a combination of the nature of the unit and the way the outcomes link together plus the overall approach taken to teaching and learning.

As a third consideration, if you are aware of the timing of external quality checks, it is good to prepare for this early in the year by setting some assignments and assembling all learner work. This will take away any pressure on your delivery and assessment.

Setting the pace for your learners

Using *Unit 1 Communication and Employability Skills for IT* as an example, the outcomes and assessment criteria can be covered through three assignments (as shown in the unit specification), through fewer larger assignments, or through a larger number of smaller assessments. This latter approach may be more appropriate if it is the first unit to be assessed, or if the unit is assessed using a 'long and thin' model, for example, delivered over a whole academic year.

Can tests be used?

Any valid method of assessment can be used and this includes tests in the appropriate place. However, the assessment must be made against the grading criteria set within the unit and this applies equally to tests as to any other method. The overriding issue is the need to prepare assessment instruments that are fit for purpose, challenging, vocationally relevant and provide a vocational focus that will interest and engage the learner.

What if the work is handed in late?

Deadlines are an important aspect of any work. In general, time deadlines should be given for the end of the unit. Centres need to inform learners about their policy towards late work. If a learner hands in work late without prior negotiation, then the centre may decline to mark it. If the centre marks the work, then all grades applicable to the unit must be considered. If the work is marked, the learner must not be punished for handing it in late. As these programmes are vocational, some assignments will not permit late submissions, such as those that involve performance to an audience or production of a newspaper.

How can learners be encouraged to achieve more than just a pass?

The assignment design, guidance and support are all important factors in learners achieving at the highest possible level. It must be recognised that learners do have choice and if they make a conscious and informed choice to achieve only at pass level then there is probably very little anyone can do. However, experience shows that learners who become fully engaged in their BTEC programme – understanding its interim and varied assessment model, the importance of tutorials and clear recording of the criteria that they have achieved – will be encouraged and will aim higher.

Example of an assessment plan for two assignments
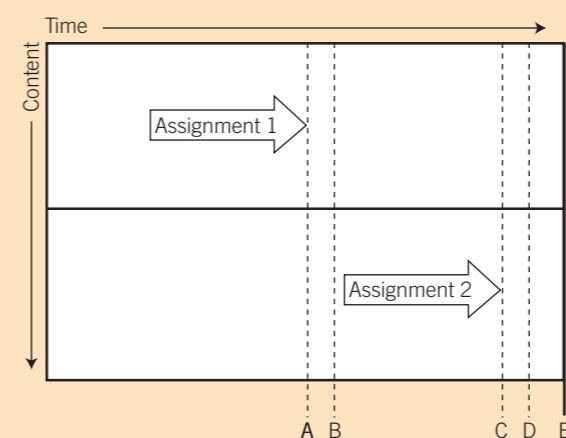
The first assignment covers the first outcome and has an initial deadline for feedback indicated at A. If this deadline is met, the work is reviewed and detailed feedback provided to learners at B. Learners can then rework the evidence, based on the feedback provided and resubmit for final assessment at E.

The deadline for feedback on assignment 2 is C, with feedback provided at D and final submission for assessment also at E. To encourage learners to meet the deadlines, work submitted after point B will only be assessed and then returned with feedback at D. Learners' work is only ever double-handled using this process but it does provide learners with an opportunity to reflect on their work and achieve at the highest possible level.

Concerns about the advantages in this system for those learners who 'take more time' to achieve are balanced out by the advantages gained by the informed feedback and, possibly, the removal of the work burden for those who meet deadlines. What this system does achieve is that it encourages learning based on sound assessment decisions.

What if a learner doesn't achieve a pass?

Feedback and support should be provided to ensure that the learner is aware of any failings in the work presented for assessment and then given the opportunity to rectify these failings through some means (such as reworking material, taking advantage of a further assessment opportunity, etc).

If the learner has not attempted assessment, then the programme team could indicate that the unit/course had not been completed by the learner, and in such cases the qualification certificate would be withheld.

How many times can a learner re-work or re-sit an assignment?

The issue here is the validity of the assessment instrument. If a learner is simply going round and round on a single task or activity brief, then the validity of the assessment must come into question and the tutor should consider the need for an alternative assessment instrument.

If the assignment is prompting learning, then that is what the course is about in the first place and therefore re-work is to be encouraged whenever applicable.

The final assessment evidence simply needs to be a valid and reliable measure of the learner's current level of achievement against the outcomes and criteria of the unit.

Improving grades

Lack of achievement can often be attributed to poor attendance and the non-production of, or inadequate, work for assessment. Monitor hand-in dates and ensure that learners are coached in time management. Ongoing assessment through teaching tutorials and portfolio reviews using the unit assessment criteria can highlight weaknesses in performance that can be addressed through individual learning plans.

It is envisaged that learners will be monitored at least once per term with additional monitoring where concerns are raised. Record progress in detail together with individual learning plans, to provide evidence should the ultimate result be 'Not passed'.

Feedback to learners on assignment work, taken in conjunction with the tutorial record and the individual learning plan, should provide evidence of how the learner has been advised in order to improve their grades.

Appendix: A sample assignment

A sample assignment follows for **Unit 1 Communication and Employability Skills for IT.**

There are two main ways in which *Unit 1 Communications and Employability Skills for IT* can be delivered:
• as a conventional continuous unit
• in parallel with other units to gain the maximum benefit from using naturally occurring evidence for assessment purposes.

The unit may be assessed using three assignments, of which the following sample could be the middle one, dealing with the topic of effective communication.

At Level 3, effective communication forms an integral part of the lives of the learners and this is something which can be regarded as a strength when looking to assess this part of the unit. It is possible to look at and compile naturally occurring evidence as shown in the following pages.

Task 1 is designed to cover criterion P4 which deals with interpersonal skills. This is a very practical criterion which uses the operative verb 'demonstrate'. The way this task has been written allows learners to gather evidence from other units or courses over a period of time and as such the elapsed time between issuing the assignment and gathering in the evidence could be fairly extensive. Giving the learners the opportunity to select their own work gives the potential to also consider associated skills, and provides the opportunity for learners to take some control of part of their own learning – a BTEC ethos.

The task asks for evidence of:
• Contribution to a small group discussion that could be taken from any unit or any relevant learning experience, or even from something like a student governors' meeting. Evidence could be a video of the meeting or, as in this example, a detailed witness or observation statement. The learner could have included notes taken at the meeting, but that is not essential.
• Formal presentation that could also be taken from any unit or any relevant learning experience, or any other situation where a presentation is required. In this example the learner has used a presentation to evidence criterion D1 as a dual-purpose piece of evidence. Primary evidence is a video or detailed witness or observation statement. Note that it is how the presentation is made, rather than what it contains, that is the required evidence here.
• Evidence in informal situations such as interaction with peers in normal day-to-day contact. Once again the primary evidence will be a video of some general situations or, as in this case, a detailed witness or observation statement.

Task 2 evidences written communication and includes criterion P6 (written technical information) and M2 (reviewing documents). The technical document for P6 can be from any technical document the learner has produced, such as technical documentation from a database or reports on any technical matter, including a user manual. The important thing is that the document is for a specified audience.

In the example, the learner has produced a document on HCI developments which comes from the Human Computer Interaction unit. This is a good example of how the work of different units can be integrated.

The evidence for M2 shows before and after correction of own documents; the learner has used the speaker notes from the D1 work, and the written work for criterion P6. With evidence for other people's work the learner has included their notes on what they found wrong, and there is an observation statement to say that the assessor has seen the learner reviewing the work and correcting it. It would have been better if before and after prints of the other learner's work had been included, but the evidence is sufficient as it stands.

Task 3 assesses criterion D1. Evidence for this has taken the form of a witness statement concentrating on the presentation content, a print of the slides and of the speaker notes used. This is perfectly good evidence; an alternative would have been to include a video of the learner making the presentation.

Task 4 is used to add a couple of items which complete criterion P5. The word processing, presentation and proofing aspects are included in the other tasks. Here we add the use of email and of web-based software, in this case video conferencing. An observation sheet together with a print-out of one or more emails is acceptable evidence.

The assignment demonstrates how you can provide learners with opportunities to take control of part of their learning, and of how assessment can be integrated across units. Both of these are regarded as good practice within BTEC.

The scenario is appropriate for Level 3, being vocationally relevant and relating well to the actual opportunities available to learners at this level.

Sample assignment front sheet

This front sheet must be completed by the learner where appropriate and be included with the work submitted for assessment.

Learner name		Assessor name	
Edward Jaye		Michael Hayes	

Date issued	Completion date	Submitted on
20 September 2010	19 November 2010	17 November 2010

Qualification		Unit	
BTEC Level 3 Extended Diploma in IT		Unit 1 Communication and Employability Skills for IT	

Assignment title	Effective Communication

In this assessment you will have opportunities to provide evidence against the following criteria. Indicate the page numbers where the evidence can be found.

Criteria reference	To achieve the criteria the evidence must show that the student is able to:	Task no.	Evidence
P4	Demonstrate a range of effective interpersonal skills	1	observation
P6	Communicate technical information to a specified audience	2	pages 1–2
M2	Review draft documents to produce final versions	2	pages 1–2
D1	Evaluate interpersonal and written communications techniques	3	pages 3–7
P5	Use IT to aid communications	4	throughout

Learner declaration

I certify that the work submitted for this assignment is my own and research sources are fully acknowledged.

Learner signature: *Edward Jaye*   Date: *17 November 2010*

Sample assignment brief

Qualification	Unit 1 Communication and Employability Skills for IT
Unit title	BTEC Level 3 Extended Diploma in IT
Start date	20 September 2010
Deadline date	19 November 2010
Assessor	Michael Hayes

Assignment title	Effective communication

The purpose of this assignment is to:
Demonstrate your proficiency in and knowledge of methods of communication

Scenario
You have been seconded to the Human Resources Department of the company for which you work in the management's hope that you can bring some IT expertise to the recruiting and training area of the business.

After creating a personal development plan for your time in the department, it is now time for you to demonstrate your ability to communicate effectively and to evaluate the various techniques used.

A lot of the evidence for criteria in this assignment can be taken from work elsewhere in this and other units, or even from other areas of your educational and social life.
Your tutor will act as your Human Resource Department line manager for the purpose of this assignment.

Task 1
You will need to gather together evidence of how effectively you have communicated with others face to face; what we call 'interpersonal skills'. This will involve:
a) Discussing any topic you like in a small group of 4–6 people. This could be research for another part of this unit, for a different unit, or for anything else social or academic. If you cannot devise a topic of your own, your line manager has a number of suggested topics which you can use. Your contribution to the group meeting will be observed and recorded.
b) Interacting with peers in class, with your friends socially, or with work colleagues if you have a part-time job.
An observation record will be provided as evidence.
c) Undertaking a formal presentation on a topic of your choice.

Suitable evidence for all these activities can be in the form of a video, or a detailed witness statement/observation sheet backed up by notes (Word documents) and slides (PowerPoint).

(Criterion P4, part P5)

Task 2
a) You will gather together evidence of where you have written technical information for a specified audience.

Any document you have produced which contains technical information and is for a pre-specified audience will be acceptable.

You may have technical documents from elsewhere in your studies such as a detailed User Guide or technical documentation from a programming unit. Providing your audience for these is defined then you can use these as evidence.

If you are short of ideas then your line manager will be able to provide suitable topics.

Pay particular attention to the use of grammar, spelling, structure and relevance of material.

(Criterion P6, part P5)

b) Review this document and another of your own documents by using a spellchecker and by proofreading. Amend them as necessary to produce a final version, showing a before and after print for each. (The second document can be anything that you have produced.)
c) Review documents as produced by two of your peers and produce a list of amendments which would lead to a finished product. Print out your lists. If possible submit a copy of the original documents or ask your tutor to sign a statement to confirm that you have reviewed them correctly.

(Criterion M2, part P5)

Task 3
Consider everything you have learnt about the techniques used for interpersonal and written communications.
The Human Resource Department management have asked you to produce an evaluation of the techniques you have used, include some of the following:
• the good points about each technique
• the less than good points about each technique
• how useful each technique is
• how easy or difficult the technique is to use
• whether the technique could be improved.

What do we mean by techniques?
They include:
• how you speak
• the language and structure you use
• engaging the audience
• relevance and accuracy
• format of documents
• and any other things you have learnt about and used.
The evaluation will be in the form of a PowerPoint presentation which will be distributed to other managers within the company, and used as the basis for a forum on communications to be held in a month's time.
(**Criterion D1**) (Your presentation could also be used as part evidence for P4 if you deliver it to an invited audience of managers, as an illustration of how it is to be used.)

Task 4
Task 4a: Send your manager an email to indicate that your work is complete.
Task 4b: Send an email to a group of interested parties that a video conferencing event will take place.
Task 4c: Use video conferencing technology to answer questions from your colleagues on some of the work you have done for this assignment.

(Part criterion P5)

Sources of information

The best sources of evidence for this topic are web based.
Attributes**:**
www.networknewsuk.com/careers/employers_want.php desirable attributes
Effective communication:
www.impactfactory.com/gate/effective_communication_skills_training_development/freegate_1657-2103-14314.html effective communication
humanresources.about.com/od/interpersonalcommunicatio1/Effective_Interpersonal_Communication.htm interpersonal communication
www.open.ac.uk/inclusiveteaching/pages/understanding-and-awareness/effective-communication-with-deaf-students.php inclusivity of the deaf

Books:
Occupational Aspirations: Effects of personal attributes, Kevin Reed, VDM Verlag Dr. Muller Aktiengesellschaft & Co. KG, 2008, ISBN 978-3639042320

Effective Communication, John Adair, Pan Books, 2009, ISBN 978-0330347860

The handbook of communication skills, Owen Hargie, Routledge, 2006, ISBN 978-0415359115

This brief has been verified as being fit for purpose.			
Assessor	Michael Hayes		
Signature	*Michael Hayes*	Date	*14 Sept 2010*
Internal verifier	I V Lundquist		
Signature	*Iris Lundquist*	Date	*13 Sept 2010*

Sample internal verification of assignment brief

Qualification	BTEC Level 3 Extended Diploma in IT
Unit title	Unit 1 Communication and Employability Skills for IT
Assessor	Michael Hayes

Internal verifier checklist		Comments
Are accurate programme details shown?	Y	
Are accurate unit details shown?	Y	
Are clear deadlines for assessment given?	Y	
Is this assignment for whole or part of a unit?	P	Covers P4, P5, P6, M2 and D1
Are the grading and assessment criteria to be addressed listed?	Y	
Does each task show which criteria are being addressed?	Y	
Are these criteria actually addressed by the tasks?	Y	Quite clearly and specifically
Is it clear what evidence the learner needs to generate?	Y	• Video/witness for P4 • Document for P6 • Observation record and notes for M2 • PowerPoint/document for D1 • P5 to include WP document and evidence of proofing from Task 2, PowerPoint from Task 3, emails from Task 4 and evidence of video conferencing from Task 4
Are the activities appropriate?	Y	With flexibility/choices to allow learners to direct their own evidence
Is there a scenario or vocational context?	Y	Relevant to subject
Are the language and presentation appropriate?	Y	
Is the timescale for the assignment appropriate?	Y	Appears long, but need to gather evidence so OK
Overall is the assignment fit for purpose?	Y	Good guidance where there might be confusion with terms used (e.g. D1)

* If "No" is recorded and the internal verifier recommends remedial action before the brief is issued, the assessor and the internal verifier should confirm that the action has been undertaken.

Internal verifier	Iris Lundquist		
Signature	Iris Lundquist	Date	13 Sept 2010

Action required:
None – maybe review timescale which seems rather long.

Action taken:
Argued that the gathering of evidence may take longer in elapsed time than in actual production time due to selecting evidence from various quarters. Agreed.

Assessor	Michael Hayes		
Signature	Michael Hayes	Date	13 September 2010
Internal verifier	Iris V Lunquist		
Signature	Iris Lundquist	Date	13 September 2010

Sample observation record for Task 1a (part P4)

Learner name	Edward Jaye
Qualification	BTEC Level 3 Extended Diploma in IT
Unit number and title	Unit 1 Communication and Employability Skills for IT

Description of activity undertaken (please be as specific as possible)

Edward took part in a group activity to consider the attributes which are valued by employers. A group of four learners undertook research on different aspects of the topic then brought their research together to provide material from which they could individually present evidence for criterion P4.

Four meetings were held, one to allocate subject areas, two for progress reports and a final meeting to bring it all together.

Edward chaired the second meeting, showing skills in keeping to the point and leading and promoting the discussions that took place. He made significant contributions to all the other meetings, volunteering to take general attributes as his subject, and giving detailed progress reports before bringing his material to the final meeting.

He made several suggestions which helped the other members focus on their subject areas, and he was able to identify some of the problems they were having.

His contribution was always made sympathetically and he showed good interpersonal skills throughout.

Assessment and grading criteria

This work contributes to criterion P4 as a demonstration of one form of interpersonal skills.

A further two examples have been evidenced to provide for the full criterion to be awarded.

See observations relating to his peers and delivering a presentation.

This is evidence for P4 (part 1 of 3)

How the activity meets the requirements of the assessment and grading criteria

This activity was designed to provide evidence towards criterion P4 in that it shows interpersonal skills in a semi formal activity involving running and participating in small meetings.

The activity will be associated with interpersonal skills in an informal environment (i.e. with peer group) and in delivering a presentation – see separate evidence.

Learner signature	Edward Jaye	Date	15 October 2010
Assessor signature	Michael Hayes	Date	15 October 2010
Assessor name	Michael Hayes		

Sample observation record for Task 1b (part P4)

Learner name	Edward Jaye
Qualification	BTEC Level 3 Extended Diploma in IT
Unit number and title	Unit 1 Communication and Employability Skills for IT

Description of activity undertaken (please be as specific as possible)

This is the second of the observed activities which contribute to the evidence for criterion P4. Edward's tutors have observed and recorded aspects of the way he relates to his peer group during normal class activity and in social times. He is good at expressing himself both verbally and with good use of body language, especially in responses where he will nod in encouragement and is good at listening. He can also be very determined if he wishes to make a point, and very forceful. Generally he is tolerant of other people's ideas, but good in verbal exchanges when he has a point to make. He has a certain amount of leadership potential when given a task within his group. Generally his interpersonal skills make him a well-liked and valued member of his peer group.

Assessment and grading criteria

This contributes to the range of interpersonal skills which have to be exhibited to gain the award of criterion P4.

A wide variety of skills were exhibited (see above) during observations of the more informal interactions with his peers.

This is evidence for P4 (part 2 of 3)

How the activity meets the requirements of the assessment and grading criteria

This activity was designed to provide evidence towards criterion P4 in that it shows interpersonal skills in a semi-formal activity involving running and participating in small meetings.

The activity will be associated with interpersonal skills in a more formal environment (i.e. meetings) and in delivering a presentation – see separate evidence.

Learner signature	Edward Jaye	Date	8 November 2010
Assessor signature	Michael Hayes	Date	8 November 2010
Assessor name	Michael Hayes		

Sample learner work for Task 2a P6

This is taken from evidence produced for Unit 13 (Human Computer Interaction) criterion D1:

Evaluate the HCI developments over recent years, relating them to the impact on society, economy and culture and predicting one potential future development and what impact it may have.

I have chosen to write an article for computer literate but non-technical adults.

The huge breadth of HCI development in recent years is testimony to the importance of this subject area to many areas of academic and business information programming. HCI as a subject seems these days to impact on everything from games design to applications and research in fields such as sociology and psychology. It is consequently quite difficult to select appropriate items for this article.

Similarly it is difficult to distinguish between impact on society, economy and culture since some developments impact on all three, but I have at least tried to relate developments to these areas. Accordingly I have selected some developments which I believe have had impacts in the three different areas.

Perhaps one of the most astounding pieces of human computer interaction in recent years in terms of culture, and possibly society, is the development of some of the modern games platforms. Most interestingly the Nintendo Wii and its myriad of accessories including steering wheels, balance boards and zappers (guns) as well as the more conventional control set. The Wii (pronounced 'we') is branded as a seventh generation games console which brought us a handheld wireless controller, the Wii remote, which acts as a handheld pointer and which detects movement in three dimensions. It gives the closest possible simulation, to actually playing sports and pastimes, of any games console so far.

The Wii allows you to play using the actual movements associated with the sports software you have purchased, and so realistic is this that there have been real attempts to market the system as a fitness machine. Software is available to simulate most sports, with tennis being particularly popular with my friends as is boxing and motor sport.

So good is the interface, and so interactive the virtual world graphics, that lessons learnt in their development have been incorporated in virtual reality training software for people who work in hazardous conditions.

The impact on 'culture' has been exceptional with families running group competitions, including inter-family competitions, as an alternative to other forms of entertainment, and other forms of fitness regimes.

The system has made some impact on the world economy, having now outsold its fiercest rivals (PlayStation 3 and Sony Xbox) and done so profitably by taking a different stance to the other two manufacturers. Microsoft and Sony both took the decision to loss lead with their system and gain on sales of software; Nintendo, it is rumoured, make profits on every sale of the hardware – not a direct economic impact perhaps, but a very interesting development.

Thinking of economic benefits, it is the sheer spread of different forms of HCI that has been the extraordinary development in this field. Easier input, faster input, automated input and input by people who have not been able to use systems before, have all contributed to economic benefits. New forms of input are the basis of much of this with text readers, voice recognition and even research into 'thought' recognition. All of these developments allow for a greater throughput of transactions by the same number or less people than previous systems – they make a great contribution to organisations which employ them.

Developments also include output in forms devised to make it easier use for many different groups of people. Tactile and speech output for the visually challenged mean that these people can now undertake jobs which were not available to them before. Speech output has also made major improvements to systems such as timetable information.

A major contribution has also been made by anomaly display, where only the results that are not consistent with normal operation are actually displayed. This has meant that scanning results for problems is a lot less onerous and can be done by a smaller number of people.

In terms of society and probably economy, one of the most revolutionary HCI developments of the last decade or so has been the increased development of things like the fly by wire system for aircraft. Essentially in this system, which first came from military jets, the pilot instructs the on-board computers what they want to do – turn to port, climb, roll, etc, normally with a joystick type control, and the computer then manoeuvres the controls to make the aircraft perform accordingly.

It was really the transition for use in civil aircraft which made this a major player in HCI. We now have civil aircraft which could not exist without the system; the Airbus 320 for instance could not be landed by two pilots using manual controls – they just could not react quickly enough to the adjustments of attitude and speed required to land this aircraft. The fly by wire system allows the aircraft to be flown by the same number of crew as the previous generation of aircraft. It also means that we can build aircraft which are lighter, more fuel efficient, easier to build and so on which could not have existed before; a great economic benefit as well.

As an extension of this, the military use head-up displays and line of sight controls. Basically pilots only have to look in a particular direction for the plane to turn in that direction, and other controls are also coupled into the head set. Head-up displays can work in several ways, but all of them essentially display information in view without a person having to move their head to look down at controls.

I think that it is in this area that there is potential for future developments. Why not drive by wire and head-up displays for drivers, particularly for trucks or perhaps cranes. In some ways this could lead to a de-skilling of some jobs and consequent economic benefit. It could also bring about consistent accuracy in the use of the machinery and help to counter human error which is the cause of so many accidents. This is, in my opinion, a possibility for developments in the future.

Sample learner work for Task 2b M2

Proofreading own material

[The learner supplied two lengthy pieces of work that he had produced during his course. The first was speaker notes to accompany a PowerPoint presentation on the theme of communication (reproduced later in this publication). The second was a text en titled HCI Evaluation *(reproduced earlier in this publication). Both pieces of work had 'before' and 'after' versions. The 'before' version showed the original, unproofread material, which included numerous spelling mistakes, layout errors and typing mistakes. The 'after' version showed where these mistakes had been picked up by the learner during the proofreading process. The learner also included a summary of the changes made to both pieces of work.]*

Sample observation record for Task 2b M2 (part P5)

Learner name	Edward Jaye
Qualification	BTEC Level 3 Extended Diploma in IT
Unit number and title	Unit 1 Communication and Employability Skills for IT

Description of activity undertaken (please be as specific as possible)

Edward has proofread two written reports, one by Sylvia Machem entitled 'Purpose and features of operating systems' and one by Abdul Mansari entitled 'Working in e-commerce'. I have seen him make corrections to spelling, grammar and construction which resulted in the document, once updated, being in a suitable form for final presentation.

Assessment and grading criteria

This work contributes to assessment criterion M2 in that it provides evidence of Edward proofreading others' draft documents and producing a final version after corrections have been made.

Edward has also used spellchecking software which contributes to the evidence for criterion P5.

How the activity meets the requirements of the assessment and grading criteria

The proofreading of the learner's own materials – which I have also observed and for which there are before and after printouts – and the proofreading and correcting of others' work provides full evidence for criterion M2.

Learner signature	Edward Jaye	Date	8 November 2010
Assessor signature	Michael Hayes	Date	8 November 2010
Assessor name	Michael Hayes		

Sample learner work for Task 3 (D1)

(Also used in evidence for Task 1c P4, and part P5)

Slide 1:

Evaluation of Communication Techniques
Interpersonal skills
Written communications

This presentation will look at some of the techniques which are used for communication and will evaluate how useful and successful they are.

Interpersonal skills refer to the skills needed to communicate with people in person, face to face.

This might be on a one to one basis, one to many as in a presentation and many to many as in meetings.

Written communications refer to any form such as letters, articles and emails.

Slide 2:

Interpersonal skills
• Delivery method
• Cues
• Language
• Engagement

We will be reviewing and evaluating these headings and some of the techniques within them.

Delivery method for interpersonal skills is normally the voice, but it doesn't need to be and we will look at the advantages and disadvantages of a few methods.

Cues cover things like body language, intonation and gestures.

When we talk about language we will look at positive and negative language, structure and vocabulary.

Engagement refers to ways in which we can get people to run along with us, keep attention and participate where necessary.

We can also add barriers to this list, or techniques we can use to reduce the affect of barriers. Explaining these techniques has been done elsewhere in the unit, but here we might mention a couple of points and talk about their effectiveness.

Slide 3:

Delivery method
• Verbal
• Signing
• Lip reading

The normal method of interpersonal communication is by the human voice. In the majority of cases this is an ideal method since people recognise voices, understand the voice intonation and feel comfortable with an experienced speaker. It is a method we are all used to and there is something comforting in hearing someone speaking to us and in responding in the same way. Voices can be very expressive and can be used to stress the importance of things which the written page does not. But to be really successful the person must be an accomplished speaker and must be able to deliver what they say in a clear and interesting manner. Against is the fact that not everyone is an accomplished speaker – some voices jar on our nerves, some are bland and uninteresting – it depends more on the characteristics of the person than does the written page. There are also places where straightforward talking is not appropriate. Very quiet places or very noisy places for instance, and also where people cannot hear very well.

For those who are aurally challenged a system of signing has been developed, in fact there are at least two different systems. Skilful use of signing, coupled with body language about which we will hear later, can relay the same sense of purpose and importance as purely vocal communication. Signing is excellent for those who cannot hear, but it does need learning and unless we have an audience which regularly relies on it then it is something with which the public in general do not relate.

Lip reading is another form of delivery which most of us do sub-consciously. As I said, it is something we use especially when we want to communicate in places which are very quiet or very noisy. The cotton mills of Lancashire were extremely noisy places and all of the operatives learned to communicate by lip reading – it is often said that the Lancashire accent owes more to the forming of words for people to lip read than to actually speaking. Lip reading does, to a large extent, rely on the deliverer forming words properly with their lips; it is much more of a skill than merely speaking without having to make a sound. Learning to lip read relies heavily on the reader understanding the accent or dialect of the speaker. It is a useful addition for people who do not hear too well but as a regular method of communication it lacks the flexibility of the voice or indeed of signing.

Slide 4:

Cues
• Facial expression
• Body language
• Intonation

The title 'Cues' might be misleading, but I can't think of a different one. What I am going to talk about is the use of non-verbal actions to emphasise, or add to, verbal communication.

In Britain by far the most important of these 'cues' is facial expression. We are used to people pulling faces, in the widest sense, as they talk. Therefore we can detect sorrow, joy, disgust, pity and so on just by looking at a face. This is useful when speaking to people; they can pick up the mood of what is being said by your facial expression. It is probably at its most useful amongst friends and informally, although its skilful use can play a major role in presentations where a particular mood has to be set. The danger is that we get so used to using facial expressions to convey points that we may use them without thinking – talking enthusiastically about something in which we do not believe, whilst our face might tell the real story!

In some cultures it is the eyes which tell the full story, and our eyes rarely lie even when the rest of our face is conforming to what we are saying. There is little we can do about this except try to deflect attention from our eyes by gestures, slides, etc.

Body language is about gestures and posture, and this has a high priority in some cultures. In Italy for instance, body language is almost a separate means of communication in that the same spoken words using different gestures can mean totally different things. Body language is vital to all our interpersonal communication. Relaxed posture adds to the confidence of an audience at a presentation. In small meetings and informal groups body language can convey all emotions from anger to joy and everything in between. Hand gestures play a major role, the pointing, the making of a fist, broad sweeps of the arms and so on can all be used to emphasise points we wish to make. We can utilise a knowledge of body language to emphasise points or to give out a certain impression of who we are and what we portray; use them to our advantage. A famous actor of the last century when about to make an exit from the stage, always used to take a step forward before he moved in the direction of his exit; it emphasised his role. As with facial expression, we have to be careful that, by accident, we do not contradict by body language that which we are saying. Another negative point is that too many gestures can act as a distraction and mean that people watch the gestures rather than take in what is being conveyed.

Intonation, or voice modulation as it is sometimes known, is another method of emphasising a point. Stressing particular words by changing the way we deliver them so that they stand out from our regular tone of voice. We can use both loudness and softness to emphasise points we need to make. The normal thing to do if we want to stress a point is to shout louder, but it is not always the most helpful. Several very successful politicians have, for instance, learned to speak more softly to emphasise a point, sometimes to move back from a microphone and speak more softly so that people have to really listen. Sometimes different intonation can be used to convey sarcasm or irony and emphasise a point in that way. We need to be able to learn such techniques, and view their effect on other people; this is not always as easy as we would believe.

These techniques in general need to be practised to provide the effect that we most desire to convey.

Slide 5:

Language
• Positive
• Negative

There are aspects involved with both interpersonal and written communications.

Here, I just want to mention two aspects of language, positive and negative.

In both cases we need to look at verbs, vocabulary, structure and delivery.

The differentiation here is quite slight, differences which are called nuances.

For instance consider the following two responses to a query:
"We will not be able to get it done until Friday"
"We will definitely get it done on Friday"

Essentially they mean the same thing – but which is positive and which is negative in the impression of the person being addressed?

We have to think carefully about how we structure our words and phrases; a slight change of verb or tense can easily change the meaning of a phrase from positive and encouraging to negative. This is another thing which takes practice to use to our advantage – we can even use it deliberately to put a less than enthusiastic slant onto something which we are promoting and vice versa.

The down side is that we can unfortunately quite innocently change the tone if we do not carefully prepare in advance.

A useful technique therefore is to carefully read through what you are going to say, attempting to ensure that the tone is positive throughout unless, of course you want to give a negative impression.

Slide 6:

There are lots of different ways in which you can engage with an audience and we have only time to mention one or two here.

Engagement is about keeping the attention of the audience, and about them being involved in some way. Attractive slides, discussions, humour, all help. Allowing limited questions during the delivery and asking the audience questions as you go along are both ways of engaging with them. Summarising and paraphrasing at regular intervals is also a help, especially when coupled with questions you will ask them. Once again this takes practice, ensuring that audience involvement and participation do not interfere with the flow of what you are trying to do e.g. questions are best dealt with a special breakpoints and should be restricted time wise.

When you are yourself listening to someone talking you should try to find out what actually bores you, because it will also bore other people. It is also good to respond occasionally with a sympathetic nod of the head, or a suitable question.

These are all easy things to say but difficult techniques to learn, and it is easy to get them wrong. For instance:

- allowing questions during delivery can descend into a verbal fracas if you are not careful.
- when listening, too frequent nods of the head are just as off putting as none at all
- too many funny stories might mean that all that is remembered is the funny story, not the message
- decorative slides can become overpowering
- allowing open questions rather than closed questions can be a distraction; it is far better to accept questions on a ring fenced area of the presentation than to allow open questions.

Beware is the watchword, the balance is difficult to obtain and needs practice.

Barriers have been dealt with elsewhere and are only included here for completeness. Many of the techniques which can be used to counteract barriers depend on good initial preparation. Environment, distractions and audience type are the main barriers.

Slide 7:

A brief look at four of the basics of communication in writing, although to what extent these can be declare techniques is debatable. There are many more items which could be included, but here I have concentrated on what I think of as the basics and the techniques which surround them.

Slide 8:

Whilst grammar and spelling are in themselves not 'techniques' they attract many techniques to get them right, and we all need to be aware of these.

In many ways the spelling and grammar cause impressions, good and bad, which are well above their 'punching weight'.

By that I mean that the sense of what you are trying to write can often be delivered irrespective of whether the grammar and spelling is correct, but it is one of the first things people notice.

Once spotted, poor grammar and poor spelling create a bad impression, and very often weigh on peoples' minds. Sometimes the jar the nerves of a reader so badly that they become a total distraction and the whole point of a document can be lost.

Software comes to our aid since we have spelling checks, grammar checks and even a thesaurus available to help, but beware since all is not what it seems.

Spelling checks only check to see if the word exists – they do not check the sense of the thing hence 'to', 'too' and 'two' are all valid words but have different use. They are useful in doing a first sift of the text to rule out all non-existent words and downright bad spelling. It is a technique to which we should all subscribe.

Grammar checks are not over helpful in that they seem to follow strange rules at times, demanding changes to phrases which are perfectly sensible. Most people find these less than helpful and the majority do not use them; optional use which might be helpful at times.

So we should use a spellchecker, very easy to use and understand, and very worthwhile despite its limitations.

How then do we check grammar and spellchecker errors? Proofreading. We need to studiously read the text through until we have identified as many errors as possible, and then, if it is a published text, have someone else check it for errors as well. We don't need special skills to do this, just time and patience – there are special symbols used by proof checkers to indicate errors, but we don't have to use them to be able to do this.

Proofreading is difficult; it takes time; it needs concentration. It is however, a technique which we should definitely use where our written work is to be publicly viewed, and a skill we should all try to gain.

Using someone else to proofread your work is also important since you may well miss errors you have made yourself, but a new pair of eyes approaches it from a different perspective.

Slide 9:

The simplest form of structure for written communications is as a single block of text.

This is quite useful where some important information has to be imparted to people who are awaiting that information and it is fine to use this style for novels, because that is what people expect, or for a letter or memo.

It would be wrong for a newspaper these days, or for a user manual, because our expectations are different for those documents.

The style in which it is written can lend to the impact by using humour, dialogue, illustrations, etc.

Other techniques which are involved are the justification left, centre, right and fully justified which need to be used with care, the default being left justified. This may leave a very ragged right had edge with a ragged left had edge from right justified and two ragged edges with centred. This may suggest that fully justified has a fairly universal appeal, but it needs care since the justification is done by inserting extra spaces into the line of text, and sometimes this is not done totally sympathetically.

We can use this structure where it is expected but it has limitations for certain uses, we need to take care that we use it appropriately, and use our writing and

illustrating techniques to make it more acceptable.

Writing in columns is a useful technique where a newspaper or journal type article is being produced. It is the standard format for such writing and is expected, but is less useful for things like letters, memos and minutes. It is a technique with limitations which we need to learn, and to use it appropriately. Less useful than the 'single block' style in terms of the number of applications to which it is applicable but a worthy technique to learn especially where we will be involved in the preparation of newspaper and journal articles. It is a relatively easy technique to use since most of the formatting work is done automatically by the software.

Tabular communications are useful for things like columns of figures in numerical reports, formatting documents like sales invoices, drawing up minutes of meeting and tables of comparison. A limited variety of uses but a useful technique where it has a purpose. Once again it needs care in use since it is easy to spoil the look of a document by the injudicious use of tables. More limited use than single block and columns.

Illustrations, as we have already said, can be used to make the material more approachable. Besides adding clarity to the narrative – it is often said that a picture is worth 1000 words – they also break up the text and the effort of concentration required to read mass text. As we shall mention on the next slide they must be relevant – they must have some meaning within the subject of the text, or add something significant to the meaning of the text. Never, ever should an illustration be added just to add variety. Placement of illustrations is another technique which needs to be acquired; to the left with text flowing round to the right; to the right with text flowing round to the left; centrally with text flowing right round; or with text terminating above and recommencing below. Care must be taken in not using too many illustrations in a text because then they lose their impact. All of this needs skill; the use of illustrations sounds quite easy but to use them correctly is quite difficult. The benefit is that used properly they bring a text to life.

Use of colour and different fonts and sizes can also be used for emphasis, but once again it is a matter of a few inclusions to make the most impact. Again skill and judgement are what is required. Too much colour and too many fonts and sizes not only lose impact, but look messy and may cause potential readers to dismiss the text before they have read it.

Slide 10:

Relevance
- Relating to the subject
- No spurious inclusions
- Inclusions used for effect

Generally everything within the written communication should relate to its subject.

Illustrations and anecdotes should add to the text and not be totally spurious.

Everything must be relevant, a totally spurious inclusion is a distraction which should not be used.

Skill is required to determine what is relevant and to what degree it is relevant.

Slide 11:

Language
- Appropriate
- Precision

Language must be appropriate to the type of communication.

Journalistic for newsletters, plain English for non-specialists, technical for specialists, informal for friends, etc.

Writers must be able to identify the language and style requirement.

Using the wrong linguistic style will put off targeted readers and your message will be lost.

For the same reason the language you use must also be precise in description and explanation.

These are skills which come only with practice, but are vital to acquire if written communication is to be effective.

Difficult to develop but worth doing so.

That completes our brief summary of the techniques used for communication.

Are there any further questions?

Sample observation record for Task 3 (D1, P4 and P5)

Learner name	Edward Jaye
Qualification	BTEC Level 3 Extended Diploma in IT
Unit number and title	Unit 1 Communication and Employability Skills for IT

Description of activity undertaken (please be as specific as possible)

PowerPoint presentation to evaluate the techniques used for interpersonal skills and written communications

Assessment and grading criteria

The presentation is used to provide evidence for the evaluation in criterion D1. This observation together with the PowerPoint slides and speaker's notes provide full evidence for criterion D1.

The delivery of the presentation is also used as evidence towards P4 and P5.

How the activity meets the requirements of the assessment and grading criteria

Edward delivered the material competently, with confidence and understanding. The audience comprised tutors and peers role-playing the management of the company for which he worked. Where the audience were unclear or felt that the material was incomplete they were allowed to ask questions and these were fielded with knowledge and professionalism.

Defining what are the 'techniques' used is quite tricky since they are not defined as such in the unit specifications. We have therefore left the learners to try to identify 'techniques' themselves from the material we have supplied and from the unit specifications. This has been done quite expertly by Edward as can be seen from the speaker's notes and slides. My observation can attest to the additional information, especially as a result of questions asked. In places some of the elements described are not what might realistically be called techniques, but always Edward has associated them with important techniques. There was also some question about the overall evaluative nature of the presentation yet Edward pointed out benefits and adverse effects, he spoke of where items can be used effectively and where they may cause problems and as such there is no doubt that this material is evaluative.

Learner signature	Edward Jaye	**Date**	27 October 2010
Assessor signature	Michael Hayes	**Date**	27 October 2010
Assessor name	Michael Hayes		

Sample learner work for Task 4a (part P5)

Dear Harry

My training on developing my communication skills is now at an end and I have completed all of the work requested.

I will naturally be hoping to continue developing these skills as I progress, but this initial phase is now complete, and I can hopefully move on to my next project in the department.

This work has been interesting and I believe I have learnt many useful things.

Regards

Edward

Sample learner work for Task 4b (part P5)

Hi everyone

There will be a video conferencing event on Friday 23 April commencing at 12:00 where you will be able to question me on all aspects of effective comunication.

A leaflet is attached with further details.

Please try to attend.

Regards

Edward

Sample observation record for Task 4c (part P5)

Learner name	Edward Jaye
Qualification	BTEC Level 3 Extended Diploma in IT
Unit number and title	Unit 1 Communication and Employability Skills for IT

Description of activity undertaken (please be as specific as possible)

Edward used the video conferencing system to speak to people in other parts of our building and to answer questions on effective communication. He did this competently, managing to get connected and to use the equipment without any help from his tutors.

He also used the email system competently, both sending and receiving emails to single and groups of people. During the work for this unit he has competently used word processing, presentation software and proofing software in addition to email and video conferencing.

Assessment and grading criteria

The observation record provides evidence for criterion P5 when taken together with the other documentary evidence in this unit.

How the activity meets the requirements of the assessment and grading criteria

The observation and documentary material cover WP, PowerPoint, proofing, other (email) and web-based (VC) which are the elements of IT specifically stated as prescriptive in the unit content.

Learner signature	Edward Jaye	Date	15 October 2010
Assessor signature	Michael Hayes	Date	15 October 2010
Assessor name	Michael Hayes		

Sample assessor's comments

Qualification	BTEC Level 3 Extended Diploma in IT	Assessor name	M Hayes
Unit number and title	Unit 1 Communication and Employability Skills for IT	Learner name	E Jaye

Grading criteria	Achieved?
P4 Demonstrate a range of effective interpersonal skills	Y
P6 Communicate technical information to a specified audience	Y
M2 Review draft documents to produce final versions	Y
D1 Evaluate interpersonal and written communication techniques	Y
P5 Use IT to aid communications a) Word processing b) Presentation c) Email d) Video conference e) Proofing	Y Task 2 Task 3 Task 4 Task 4 Task 2

Learner feedback

A difficult assignment, even for a more mature type of student like me. I found it difficult to provide evidence of things which I do naturally.

Assessor feedback

This is a well put together piece of work which is worthy of the award of all targeted criteria.
Criterion **P4** is evidenced mainly by my observation and by some video evidence which is stored here at the centre. This is acceptable.

There is a nice, perhaps short, technical paper based around HCI for criterion **P6**; well done; it definitely puts ideas forward to a non-technical audience.

Evidence for **M2** is a mixture of before and after prints of own reports together with some notes and observations. A good piece of work demonstrating you are highly proficient in this area.

The evaluation for **D1** by using a slide display is always novel but you have done this well. At first glance I did wonder if it was evaluative, but in seeing you deliver this it became clear that you had made evaluative judgements at almost every stage.

Evidence for criterion **P5** has been shown in several aspects of the work and accumulated to cover the whole of the criterion.

Well done for some excellent work.

Action plan

N/A

Assessor signature	Michael Hayes	Date	22 November 2010
Learner signature	Edward Jaye	Date	26 November 2010

Sample internal verification of assessment decisions

Qualification	BTEC Level 3 Extended Diploma in IT		
Unit number and title	Unit 1 Communication and Employability Skills for IT		
Assessor	Michael Hayes		

Assignment title	Effective communication		
Learner's name	Edward Jaye		
Which criteria has the assessor awarded?	**Pass** P4, P5, P6	**Merit** M2	**Distinction** D1
Do the criteria awarded match those targeted by the assignment brief?	**Yes** Details Detailed observations for criterion P4, a short report for criterion P6, a mixture of written work and observation for M2 and a PowerPoint presentation for D1.		
Has the work been assessed accurately?	**Yes** Details The assessor has been very accurate and consistent throughout		
Is the feedback to the learner: • **Constructive?** • **Linked to relevant assessment and grading criteria?** • **Identifying opportunities for improved performance?**	**Yes** Details Very little feedback was needed since the work was such that all targeted criteria were awarded. The feedback is linked to the criteria. There was no need to provide opportunities to improve since all criteria were awarded.		
Does the grading decision need amending?	**No** Details Assessment is accurate. The assessor has provided adequate feedback to the learner as well as assessing accurately.		
Remedial action taken	None required		
Internal verifier name	Michael Hayes		
Internal verifier signature	Michael Hayes	Date	26 November 2010
Confirm action completed	N/A		
Assessor name	I V Lundquist		
Assessor signature	Iris Lundquist	Date	26 November 2010