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# Essential Skills Wales Support Document

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This guidance is also available in Welsh.

# Essential Skills Wales support document.

## Introduction

It must be emphasised that Essential Skills Wales focus on the process of developing these skills over a period of time rather than on the product of any particular piece of work. Candidates are required to take time to develop their skills and to show evidence of this development. The skills must be applied in purposeful contexts. This skills-based approach to teaching and learning is a fundamental change from the knowledge-based approach.

## Principles of assessment

When considering the content of the third column in the standards ('In order to show that you are competent, you need to know how to:'), assessors, IVs and EVs must be mindful of the following:

“the third column ('In order to show that you are competent, you need to know how to:') lists the skills that candidates must have in order to show that they are competent at the appropriate level. These are not lists of skills to which candidates should confine themselves, nor should they be regarded as tick-lists for assessment purposes. Rather, they are indicative of the skills in which candidates will need to be competent if they are to produce evidence at the required standard.”

(page 4, *Essential Skills Wales* (WG 2010))

When assessing a portfolio, assessors, IVs and EVs should first make a professional judgment of whether it is, overall, at the level described in the 'Progression' statements on pages 5/6, 10/11 (Communication), 97/98 (Application of Number) and 195/196 (ICT).

If the portfolio is, when considered holistically, at the appropriate level but not all the skills listed in the third column are demonstrated, then the assessor/IV/EV must make a professional judgment as to whether those that are missing are sufficiently important and relevant to the topic of the work in the portfolio that there are grounds for failing to pass the work as achieving the required standard. Assessors, IVs and EVs are responsible for making a professional holistic assessment of the portfolio rather than looking for slavish adherence to every detail in the third column.

The evidence requirements in the second column are not negotiable. The work in portfolios must always be fit for purpose.

## **Drafts of work**

The ESW standards (and the emerging WES standards) place great emphasis on the development of skills rather than on the finished product. This means that there must be evidence of the candidate's learning and development. There is no need to include every single draft in a portfolio; what is required is evidence that the candidate has made progress from their initial assessment to reach the standard for which they are aiming. For example, if evidence for written Communication is produced electronically, there should be at least some planning notes, a first draft, the final draft, and examples of work before spell-checks and amendments are done.

## **Communication**

### **1. C1.3.1: Grammar, spelling and punctuation**

As stated in C1.3.1 of the standards, punctuation must be correct, as this term is defined on page 86. Where a candidate submits a portfolio that falls short in this area, teachers and trainers should help the candidate to revise their learning and should not, under any circumstances, correct the mistakes.

The definition of 'correct' on page 86 explains that occasional 'slips' in grammar, spelling and punctuation may be permissible; assessors should use their professional judgement. However, if the work in question is intended for public consumption, it must be without mistakes.

### **2. C1.3.1, C2.3.1, C3.3.1: Types and formats of documents**

The definition of 'appropriate' is on page 84, 'format' on page 89, and 'type' on page 94. It follows that, in C1.3.1 for example, the portfolio must include two short documents, each of a different type (eg informative, instructional, persuasive) and each in a different format (eg letter, memo, leaflet). Both the type and the format of each document must be suitable for its purpose and audience.

### **3. C2.2.1, C3.2.1: Length of reading lists**

There can be no fixed answer to the question "How long is a reading-list?". As in some other aspects of assessment, assessors must take responsibility for exercising professional judgment. It will be helpful to take into account the context of the work, the degree of independence that is required of candidates at each level, and the range and complexity of the techniques and skills they use.

#### **4. Use of the internet**

The internet is not, per se, a format. However, documents on the internet appear in a variety of formats, as they do in printed materials.

#### **5. C1.1.1, C2.1.1, C3.1.1: Range of contexts**

Two or more contexts may be found within one setting. For example, in a school the classroom and the common room are different contexts.

### **ICT**

#### **1. Evidence requirements at levels 2 and 3**

A separate log/diary is required for each activity and each log/diary must meet the requirements set out in column 2 "Evidence requirements". However, the paragraphs on page 254 (Level 2) and page 270 (Level 3) show that the evidence in the bulleted lists on those pages needs to be presented in only one or other of the two activities, though it may appear in both. This information also appears on pages 198-199.

Logs/diaries may be in note form and do not have to meet any formal Communication standard but they must be legible and understandable by someone who was not involved in the work.

#### **2. Health and safety**

Evidence of meeting health and safety standards is required in each activity. Such evidence should be integrated into the log/diary for each activity in the detail specified at each level.

### **Application of Number**

#### **1. N1.2.2: use of data and calculations**

The first bullet in "Evidence requirements" for N1.2.2 on page 144 states that evidence must show that the candidate has used data and information from N1.1. This appears to be inconsistent with point 5 on page 140. While the latter is correct, the crucial point is that the data and information used to carry out calculations must be purposeful and set in a real context.

**2. N1.3.2: written notes**

Written notes do not have to meet any formal Communication standard but must be legible and understandable by someone who was not involved in the work. Other forms of evidence (eg witness testimony of a discussion with the candidate) are acceptable if properly authenticated.

**3. “Given”, “obtained”, “collected”**

These terms, as defined on pages 187, 189 and 184, are integral to progression through the levels, as described on pages 97/98, and reflect the degree of independence (defined on page 187) that candidates must demonstrate at each level.

**4. N2.1.3: copies of source material**

Where the sources of data and information are extensive, a representative sample is acceptable.