

Unit Award Scheme

Guide to Writing and Submitting Units

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Version 1

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1. Checking availability of existing units

1. Before you write a unit, you should check what is already available. There are over twenty thousand units already in existence, either written by other centres or by AQA, in a wide variety of subject and topic areas, and for all ability levels.
2. The main sources are as follows:
 - The Unit Award Scheme pages of the AQA Website. These contain the largest selection of units. Every centre will also be provided with a CD of these units.
 - AQA's unit-based Entry level specifications. Units from most of these specifications can also be used as stand alone units within the Unit Award Scheme.
 - AQA's Level 1 Certificates in MFL (Foundation Certificate in Secondary Education). Units from these specifications can also be used as stand alone units within the Unit Award Scheme.
 - Units available from other bodies including the Lancashire Partnership Team and EQUALS.

Please contact the Unit Award Scheme department if necessary for help in accessing units.

3. You can use units as they are, or you can submit new units for validation as minor amendments to existing units.
4. From time to time, old units are withdrawn from use. AQA gives advance notice to centres when a withdrawal of units is going to take place so that there is time for centres to make appropriate arrangements. You should always contact AQA if you are unsure whether a unit is valid or not.

2. Writing a unit

1. All units, new or amended, must be submitted in a common format using the web form. The common unit format is illustrated in Appendix 1. Use of the web form will ensure consistency in the presentation of units, and in the Unit Award Statements which are produced from them. It will enable AQA to add new units to the website on a regular basis.
2. The word 'student' rather than 'young person' or 'learner' must be used throughout. However, the word 'teacher' can be replaced by something like 'tutor', 'trainer' or 'youth worker', if this is more appropriate.
3. The criteria for writing units which follow explain what each section of the unit should include and how it should be completed.

3. Unit Title

1. The title of a unit should be an accurate summary of the unit's content. It must not be ambiguous and must be meaningful on the student's Letter of Credit, where only the title of each unit achieved appears.
2. The title must be no longer than 60 characters, including spaces.
3. Definite and indefinite articles, e.g. 'THE ...' or 'AN ...', should not normally be used to start a title if the title is acceptable without it, but may be used in certain titles where it is needed in order for the title to read appropriately, e.g. 'THE 2012 LONDON OLYMPIC GAMES'.
4. The title must be clear and unambiguous. For example, it is not clear whether a unit entitled 'INVESTIGATING BORDERS' is a geography unit about different countries' borders, a gardening unit about flower borders, a DIY unit about the use of borders when painting and decorating or even a maths-type unit about the borders of different shapes. However, a title such as INVESTIGATING SEASONAL COLOUR IN A FLOWER BORDER is much clearer.
5. '(UNIT 1)', '(UNIT 2)' and so forth can be added to a title where a student will progress through a series of units. It should not be used where units are written as alternatives for students with different abilities. If the '(UNIT X)' format is used, care must be taken in the positioning of the '(UNIT X)' within the title, e.g. 'PET CARE: RABBITS (UNIT 1)' is used where there are a number of units on rabbits, but 'PET CARE (UNIT 1): RABBITS' is where there are a number of pet care units, the first of which is on rabbits.
6. If a student needs assistance or support to achieve all outcomes within a unit, then this needs to be acknowledged. One way of showing this, if the support applies to all outcomes, is to add a phrase such as 'WITH ASSISTANCE', 'WITH SUPPORT' or 'WITH VERBAL PROMPTS' to the end of the title. If the student is able to complete a number of the outcomes independently, but needs support in order to achieve others, it is clearer to indicate the support in the appropriate outcome rather than in the title (see section 6.13).
7. No reference should be made in the title to an awarding body or level of attainment, however words such as 'BASIC ...' or 'INTRODUCTION TO ...' may be used.

4. Curriculum Area

This must be taken from the recognised list and is used to classify units on the Unit Award Scheme database. Up to three areas can be given. A list of Curriculum Areas to choose from is shown in Appendix 2.

5. Unit Description

1. The Unit Description must cover WHAT the student will learn and HOW the student will learn. It should be written in full sentences.
2. If appropriate, it should also cover WHERE the student will learn if the learning takes place somewhere other than in a normal 'classroom' environment, e.g. on a field trip.
3. It should not be a repeat of the detail which is in the outcomes. Often one or two sentences about WHAT will be learnt and HOW this will be learnt is sufficient.
4. It should be written in the future tense and the student should be referred to in the singular throughout, i.e. 'the student' not 'the students', 'he/she' not 'they' and 'his/her' or 'own' not 'their'.
5. If a centre wishes to indicate an association with another programme of study or scheme, e.g. the National Curriculum, a statement beginning 'This unit is associated with ...' should be used.

6. Outcomes

1. The outcomes will appear on a student's Unit Award Statement as they appear in the unit. Therefore they must be clear, specific and unambiguous and particular attention should be given to punctuation, spelling and grammar. The student should be referred to in the singular, but use of 'he/she' or 'him/her' in this section is best avoided where possible, as the certificates will be awarded to a specific individual.
2. All learning outcomes for which a student is to be given credit must be placed under one or more of the following four stems. Any or all of the stems can be used and re-used, and in any order, but the wording of the stems cannot be changed. A unit does not have to contain all four stems and can contain just one. It is up to you and depends on the nature of what the student is doing.
3. The four stems are

demonstrated the ability to

to give the student credit for skills and abilities, e.g. 'play ...;', 'make ...;', 'identify ...;', 'take part in ...;'

shown knowledge of

to give the student credit for knowledge gained during the unit, e.g. 'at least three items ...;', 'the main features of ...;', 'the names of ...;'

acquired an understanding of

to give the student credit for understanding which goes beyond simple knowledge and requires an explanation, e.g. 'why ...;', 'the main effects of ...;'

experienced

to give the student credit for experiences he or she has had during the learning, e.g. 'visiting a ...;', 'listening to a ...;', 'a sensory exploration of ...;'

13. If a student cannot achieve an outcome independently, and requires some form of support to achieve it, then this needs to be acknowledged either in the title of the unit, if the support is needed to achieve all outcomes, or in the specific outcomes to which it applies, e.g. '*demonstrated the ability to ... brush own hair with assistance.*' (See also section 3.6).
14. If the outcomes are clear in terms of their requirements, then this will make it much easier to allocate a level to the unit.

7. Evidence

The evidence given in a unit shows what must be provided as proof that the student has successfully achieved each outcome. Appropriate evidence must be stipulated in relation to each and every outcome. This is done by indicating the outcome number(s) in brackets after each piece of evidence, e.g. for a unit with six outcomes, the evidence might be

Student completed worksheets (1-3)

Student's graph (4)

Teacher completed checklist (5,6)

7.1 Types of evidence

1. There are two main types of evidence:
 - that produced by the student (e.g. student's written work, student completed worksheets, student produced artefact)
 - that supplied by the teacher (e.g. a teacher completed checklist, a teacher written record).
2. It must always be stated who has produced or generated the evidence, e.g. 'Student's ...', 'Teacher ...'.
3. The evidence should be specific, avoiding the general term 'Student's work' as it is not clear what the 'work' evidence is. For example, for an outcome '4. draw a map showing at least five tourist attractions in ...;' the evidence should be 'Student produced map (4)' not 'Student's work (4)'.
4. Student produced evidence should be specified where an outcome generates it, e.g. for an outcome 'create a short booklet about ...;' it would be expected that the student's booklet would be available as evidence rather than a teacher completed checklist. This remains true even if evidence cannot be retained for external assessment/monitoring, e.g. student prepared meal, or cannot realistically be posted, e.g. student built brick wall. When it comes to supplying evidence for the AQA Assessor, photographs of this sort of evidence are fully acceptable.
5. If a teacher completed checklist is specified as evidence rather than, for example, student's written work, it must be appreciated that the teacher will have to have individual discussions

with each student. Only by doing this will a teacher be certain that each student has the required information, knowledge or understanding. A date would then be put on the checklist when each discussion has taken place, showing that the student has achieved the outcome.

7.2 Appropriateness of evidence

1. Always consider the appropriateness of the evidence and whether it will fully show that a student has achieved an outcome. If an outcome states that a student will have '*demonstrated the ability to ... work following appropriate safety procedures;*', a student produced list of safety procedures would not be appropriate evidence, as it would show that the student knew them but not that they had necessarily been followed. Similarly, a still photograph of the student at work would not in itself confirm that safety procedures had all been adhered to.
2. Video, taped or photographic evidence can, of course, be appropriate for certain outcomes, but caution should be exercised before specifying it in that
 - there is always the possibility of the equipment needed to produce the evidence not working or not being available on the day;
 - if you have a large number of students, you would have to produce the required evidence for all of them and ensure that each student is identifiable.

It is therefore often advisable to have a dated checklist or a teacher written record as evidence instead of, or at least as an alternative to, this kind of evidence.

3. Student completed tests are rarely specified as evidence as, if used, students would need to show in their answers achievement of all the outcomes to which the test relates, and may gain a high mark while failing to demonstrate achievement of one of the outcomes.
4. When specifying student written work or notes as evidence, bear in mind that this must reflect individual achievement. Copied work is therefore not normally acceptable, although selective copying can evidence an ability to extract material or carry out research.
5. Where an outcome refers to an individual's contribution to a group activity, e.g. 'participate as a member of a group to produce a leaflet about ...'; it is important that evidence is provided of the individual's contribution to the group activity. The leaflet itself would not provide appropriate evidence, unless it was highlighted or annotated in some way to show each student's individual contribution, but a teacher checklist which focused on each student's skills in producing the leaflet would provide suitable evidence. The checklist is usually the most appropriate and straightforward form of evidence where the student is working as a member of a group, e.g. in taking part in or contributing to a group discussion, working with others to ..., organising others to

7.3 Alternative and additional evidence

1. If you do not wish to commit yourself in advance to offering one type of evidence rather than another, alternatives may be specified. This gives more flexibility where different abilities of student may produce different evidence, e.g. 'Student completed worksheet or written notes (3)' (where some students may need more prompting in the form of a structured worksheet to

complete outcomes) or 'Student's written work or teacher completed checklist (6)' (where some students may not be able to provide written evidence, but can provide oral evidence).

2. Where possible keep the evidence as simple and straightforward as possible, avoiding duplication unless this is necessary. For example, for an outcome 'write a poem of at least six lines;' the student's written poem will suffice as evidence. Only if the outcome was something like 'read a short verse and write own short poem in the same style;' would a teacher checklist be needed in addition to the written work, to cover the 'read ...;' element of the outcome.

7.4 Teacher supplied evidence – teacher written record

A teacher written record is a statement which outlines briefly what a student has said or done to demonstrate achievement of an outcome. For example, if an outcome requires the student to contribute an idea to a planning activity, the teacher would need to indicate the idea contributed, not simply say that the student had contributed an idea.

7.5 Teacher supplied evidence – teacher completed checklist

1. A teacher completed checklist is the easiest way of providing evidence for an outcome which is assessed by observation or by discussion, and a date must be recorded on the checklist to show when the outcome was achieved.
2. If the outcome is straightforward, or is an 'experienced' outcome or an outcome which contains specified elements which will be achieved on the same occasion, often a single date written on the checklist by the teacher, when that outcome was achieved, will suffice.
3. However, for more complex outcomes which are assessed by observation or discussion, where the outcome will be achieved through a series of steps which are not specified in the outcome itself, e.g. 'conduct an experiment to investigate ...;' or where an outcome contains two or more specific elements which will not necessarily be achieved on the same occasion, e.g. 'explain at least three causes of ...;' or 'take part in two high level mountain walks;', then use of an itemised checklist, dated to show when each 'part' was achieved, will be necessary.
4. You must also specify how the checklist is to be itemised for an outcome or outcomes by giving details about this in the Evidence section. Below is an example of how this should be done.
 - For a 'shown knowledge of' outcome, '4. at least four dangers of misusing drugs;' which was assessed by discussion and evidenced by an itemised checklist, the Evidence section would need to specify that 'For outcome 4 checklist to be itemised into 4 parts to show that four dangers have been identified.' See also the example in Appendix 1.
5. Further guidance on the use of checklists and itemised checklists, and how itemisation should be shown on a unit, can be found in the leaflet entitled *Secondary Evidence: Teacher Completed Checklists and Written Records* which is sent to all centres upon registration and is also available on the website.

8. Levels

1. Levels have to be assigned to units by comparing the outcomes and evidence stated on the unit with the national level descriptors, using a 'best fit' approach. The level descriptors are shown in Appendix 3.
2. The level should be shown as 'Pre-Entry', 'Entry', 'Level 1', 'Level 2' or 'Level 3' and no account should be taken of the fact that some students may work at a higher level than the unit requires. Appendix 3 also provides examples of qualifications at these levels.
3. Any breakdown of levels within these categories is not needed for Unit Award Scheme purposes and should not be shown.
4. There are no formal level descriptors shown for 'Pre-Entry' so centres need to make a judgement about whether the outcomes are below National Curriculum level 1. The degree of assistance given may have implications for the level assigned.

9. Notional Learning Time

1. Notional learning time (NLT) is the estimated length of time it will take, on average, for a student to achieve the outcomes. Individual students may take less or more time to complete the unit.
2. It includes not only timetabled hours, but also related personal activity, study or research and assessment. It should be specified in 10 hour blocks as follows: '10 hours', '20 hours', '30 hours', or 'less than 10 hours' or '< 10 hours' where a unit is very short.

10. Procedures for Making and Recording Assessments

1. The Procedures for Making and Recording Assessments consist of two parts. The first part must state who is assessing and what technique(s) will be used to assess each outcome. The second part is always the standard sentence covering where the assessment(s) is formally recorded 'All assessments recorded on an AQA Summary Sheet'.
2. Further guidance on the use of checklists and itemised checklists, and how itemisation should be shown on a unit, can be found in the leaflet entitled *Secondary Evidence: Teacher Completed Checklists and Written Records* which is sent to all centres upon registration and is also available on the website.
3. The Procedures section must begin 'Assessed by the teacher ... (or by the tutor, the trainer, the youth worker ...) or something like 'Assessed by the teaching assistant, verified by the teacher, ...' if another appropriate adult is assessing.

4. The sentence then needs to continue with the assessment technique(s) which will be used to assess each outcome and this will depend on what the evidence is. The following assessment techniques may be used.

Inspection

(for outcomes where the student has produced tangible evidence, e.g. written work, worksheets, an artefact).

Observation

(for outcomes involving tasks or activities which are evidenced through use of a teacher completed checklist or a teacher written record, e.g. take part in a discussion, play the position of goalkeeper in a game of football, play a simple melody on a keyboard).

Discussion or Communication

(for outcomes requiring knowledge or understanding or another achievement which is evidenced through the use of a teacher completed checklist or a teacher written record, where one-to-one discussion or communication with each student is necessary for the outcome to be assessed, e.g. how to treat a minor cut or graze, at least two causes of the Second World War, identify the main points on a compass, state which type of drink is preferred).

Listening

(to a student's performance or oral work, e.g. sing a nursery rhyme, state two facts about the weather in French).

NB Often the assessment technique of observation will include listening, so only the former is needed.

5. The assessment technique(s) needs to be decided according to what is appropriate in relation to each outcome and its evidence and then written in the following way

'Assessed by the teacher by observation (1,2,6), inspection or discussion (3) and inspection (4,5). All assessments recorded on an AQA Summary Sheet.'

This example would be appropriate for a unit which had a teacher checklist as evidence for outcomes 1, 2 and 6, which were skills, student's written work or a teacher checklist for outcome 3, which required knowledge, and something like student's graphs, maps or diagrams for outcomes 4 and 5.

6. When knowledge and/or understanding outcomes are evidenced on a teacher checklist, one-to-one discussion with each student, to ascertain that each has the required knowledge or understanding, is normally needed, instead of, or as well as, the technique of observation.
7. Where a checklist or written record is used as evidence of the student taking part in a discussion, the technique for assessing would normally be observation and not discussion.

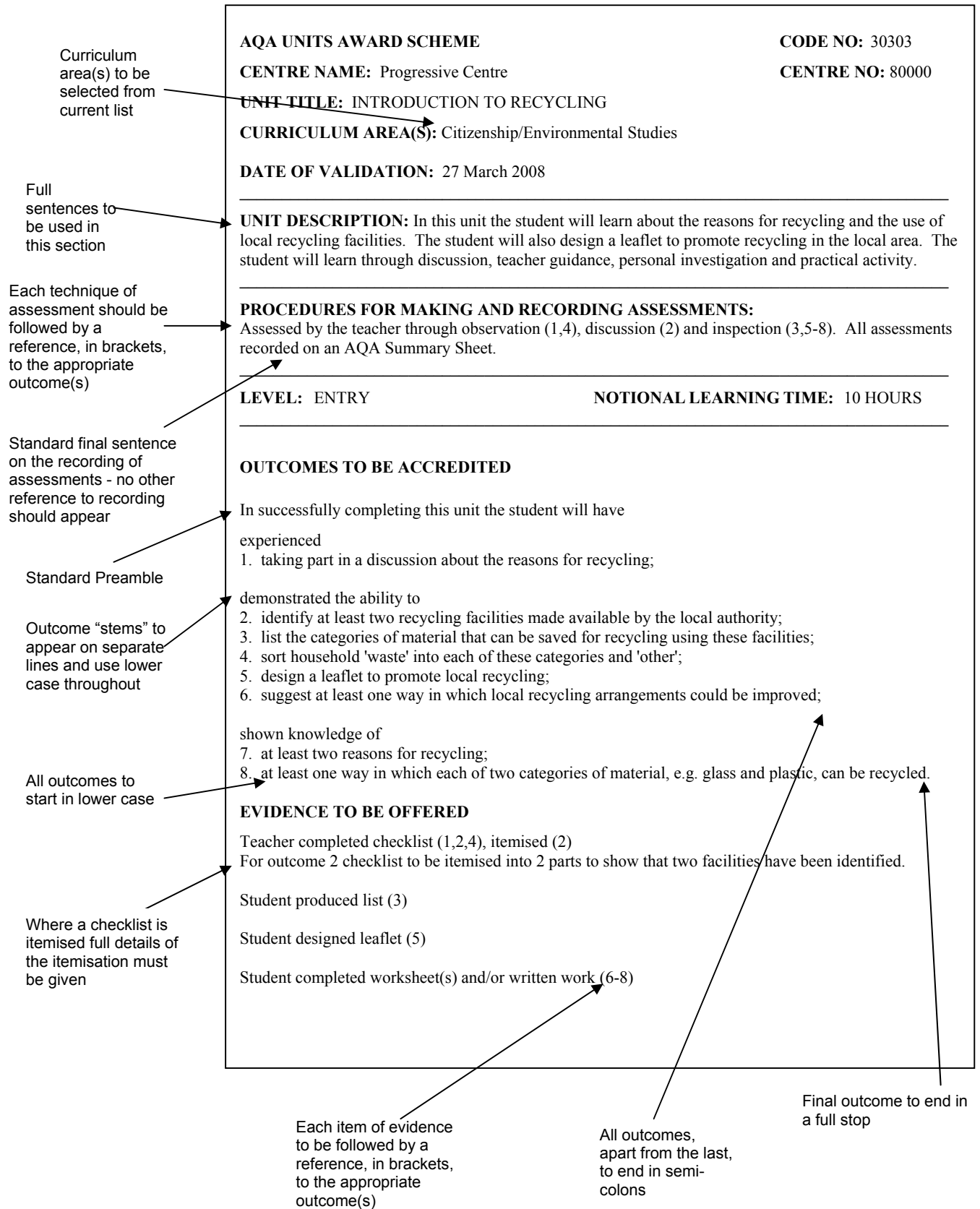
8. As with the evidence, keep the assessment techniques as simple and straightforward as possible, by addressing the 'who' will be assessing and 'how' questions, but avoid the use of 'catch-all' references, for example observation and discussion for all outcomes, unless each and every outcome is to be assessed by both techniques.

11. Submitting units for validation

1. You must use the web form when writing and submitting all new or amended units to AQA for validation. The units will need to have been carefully pre-validated in your centre before being submitted to AQA.
2. Centres are asked to give the names of the members of their pre-validating committee when they join the Scheme. At any pre-validation meeting, the unit writer should be present, together with the Unit Award Scheme Co-ordinator and preferably a representative with responsibility for the curriculum and assessment or some other appropriate person(s). For Local Authority or Consortium-supported centres, this pre-validation might be carried out by another committee established for this purpose. The committee should look at a unit to be submitted to ensure that it represents an educationally valid and worthwhile experience and should check it against the unit writing criteria. Any problems with the unit should be addressed.
3. A checklist for unit writers and pre-validating committees is on the disk which is sent to all centres upon registration in the Scheme.
4. When accepted by the committee, the unit should be submitted through the centre's Co-ordinator or the supporting LA/Consortium via the web form to AQA.
5. On receipt of the new unit, AQA will allocate a unique code to the unit and it will then be considered against the unit writing criteria by an AQA Scrutineer. The Scrutineer will complete a report for the centre on each unit, either recommending that the unit meets the criteria and should be validated, or that the unit needs further amendment(s). Full details about the required amendments, with suggestions or recommendations as to how this could be done, will be included in the report.
6. Where clarification of a comment is required or you disagree with any of the comments made, you should contact AQA. Once the necessary amendments have been made, the unit can be resubmitted.
7. AQA will let the Co-ordinator know when a unit is validated, and will, if amendments are all minor and straightforward, e.g. missing punctuation, make the necessary amendments. No unit can be assessed until validation has been confirmed by AQA. Newly validated units will be automatically added to a centre's unit choices.

12. Unit Writing Training

Half day training meetings for unit writers are held each year in various locations throughout the country. Details of the meetings are sent to Co-ordinators beforehand and there is a charge for the training.



LIST OF CURRICULUM AREAS

Appendix 2

When writing a new unit, a centre, LEA or Consortium must allocate it to one or more of the following areas.

In many cases, one curriculum area only will be specified, but **units may be assigned to a maximum of three appropriate areas.**

Agriculture and Horticulture	Hospitality and Catering
Art and Design	Information and Communication Technology
Biology/Human Biology	Italian
Business	Key Skills: Application of Number
Chemistry	Key Skills: Communication
Citizenship	Key Skills: Improving own Learning and Performance
Classics	Key Skills: ICT
Construction and the Built Environment	Key Skills: Problem Solving
Craft Skills	Key Skills: Working with Others
Cultural Studies	Law
D & T: Electronic Products	Leisure and Recreation
D & T: Food Technology	Life Skills
D & T: Graphic Products	Literacy
D & T: Product Design	Manufacturing
D & T: Resistant Materials	Mathematics
D & T: Systems and Control	Media Studies
D & T: Textiles Technology	Modern Foreign Languages (Other)
Drama and Theatre Studies	Motor Vehicle Studies
Economics	Music
Electronics	Music Technology
Engineering	Numeracy
English	Outdoor Education
English as a Second Language	Performing Arts
English Literature	Personal, Social and Health Education
Environmental Studies	Philosophy
Fashion	Physical Education and Sport
French	Physics
Geography	Professional Development
Geology	Psychology
German	Religious Studies
Hair, Beauty and Complementary Therapies	Science
Health and Safety	Sociology
Health and Social Care	Spanish
History	Thinking Skills
Home Economics: Child Development	Travel and Tourism
Home Economics: Food and Nutrition	Welsh
Home Economics: Textiles	Work Related Learning
Home Maintenance	

NATIONAL LEVEL DESCRIPTORS

Appendix 3

The level descriptors are based on descriptors developed by CCEA (the Northern Ireland version of QCA) and broadly adopted by QCA.

Entry Level			
Intellectual Skills and Attributes	Processes	Accountability	Examples of Qualifications at same level
<p>Employ recall and demonstrate elementary comprehension in a narrow range of areas with dependency on ideas of others.</p> <p>Exercise basic skills.</p> <p>Receive and pass on information.</p> <p>Learning to Learn – Learn to learn in a disciplined manner in a structured and supervised environment: rely on knowledge seen as supplied by others.</p> <p>Insight – demonstrate independent role for self.</p>	<p>Operate mainly in closely defined and highly structured contexts.</p> <p>Carry out processes that are repetitive and predictable.</p> <p>Undertake the performance of clearly defined tasks.</p> <p>Assume a limited range of roles.</p>	<p>Carry out directed activity under close supervision.</p> <p>Rely entirely on external monitoring of output and quality.</p>	<p>Entry Level Certificate</p>

Level 1			
Intellectual Skills and Attributes	Processes	Accountability	Examples of Qualifications at same level
<p>Employ a narrow range of applied knowledge and comprehension.</p> <p>Demonstrate a narrow range of skills.</p> <p>Apply known solutions to familiar problems.</p> <p>Present and record information from readily available sources.</p> <p>Learning to Learn – Learn to learn with some independence in a managed environment.</p> <p>Insight – Assume limited responsibility for consistency of self-understanding and behaviour.</p>	<p>Show basic competence in a limited range of predictable and structured contexts.</p> <p>Utilise a clear choice of routine responses.</p> <p>Co-operate with others.</p> <p>Function within familiar, homogeneous groups.</p>	<p>Exercise a very limited degree of discretion and judgement about possible actions.</p> <p>Carry restricted responsibility for quality and quantity of output.</p> <p>Operate under direction supervision and quality control.</p>	<p>GCSE Grades D - G Level 1 NVQ</p>

Level 2			
Intellectual Skills and Attributes	Processes	Accountability	Examples of Qualifications at same level
<p>Apply knowledge with underpinning comprehension in a number of areas.</p> <p>Make comparisons.</p> <p>Interpret available information.</p> <p>Demonstrate a range of skills.</p> <p>Learning to Learn – Learn to take some responsibility for own learning within a supervised environment.</p> <p>Insight – Assume partial responsibility for consistency of self-understanding and behaviour.</p>	<p>Choose from a range of procedures performed in a number of contexts, some of which may be routine.</p> <p>Co-ordinate with others.</p>	<p>Undertake directed activity with a degree of autonomy.</p> <p>Achieve outcomes within time constraints.</p> <p>Accept increased responsibility for quantity and quality of output subject to external quality checking.</p>	<p>GCSE Grades A*- C</p> <p>Level 2 NVQ</p>

Level 3			
Intellectual Skills and Attributes	Processes	Accountability	Examples of Qualifications at same level
<p>Apply knowledge and skills in a range of complex activities demonstrating comprehension of relevant theories.</p> <p>Access and evaluate information independently.</p> <p>Analyse information and make reasoned judgements.</p> <p>Employ a range of responses to well defined but often unfamiliar or unpredictable problems.</p> <p>Learning to Learn – Learn to take some responsibility for own learning within a structured environment; begin to question reliability of sources of knowledge.</p> <p>Insight – Assume full responsibility for consistency of self-understanding and behaviour.</p>	<p>Operate a variety of familiar and unfamiliar contexts using a range of technical or learning skills.</p> <p>Select from a considerable choice of procedures.</p> <p>Give presentations to an audience.</p> <p>Function within multiple, complex and heterogeneous groups.</p>	<p>Engage in self-directed activity with guidance/ evaluation, exercising some initiative.</p> <p>Accept responsibility for quality and quantity of output.</p> <p>Accept limited responsibility for the quality and quantity of output of others.</p>	<p>GCE A Levels</p> <p>Level 3 NVQ</p>

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