



Guidelines for Writing Units

These guidelines have been produced in the light of the introduction of the new 10-hour credit. They support national consistency in the development of units across all Lantra Awards provision. The approach to writing units is the same regardless of level and credit value. The definitive Guidance regarding credit and how to develop units is contained within the QCA Support Pack for the Qualifications and Credit Framework. This is available free from www.qca.org.uk – publication number QCA/07/3412

What is a unit?

A unit gives details of what a learner is expected to know, understand, or be able to do on completion of a period of learning (the learning outcomes) and the criteria that will be used to judge whether these outcomes have been achieved (assessment criteria).

Each unit must include the following five key features (these are known as the unit specifications):

- Title
- Learning outcomes; a coherent set of measurable achievements.
- Assessment criteria; enable a judgement to be made about whether or not, and how well, the students have achieved the learning outcomes.
- Level; a unit can have one of five levels: Entry, One, Two, Three, Four.
- Credit value; the number of credits ascribed to a unit. This identifies the number of credits a learner is awarded upon successful achievement of the unit. One credit is awarded for the learning outcomes which a learner, on average, might reasonably be expected to achieve in a notional 10 hours of learning.

A unit does not contain everything that is taught but the key achievements that the learner is expected to leave with at the end of the learning process. These achievements, the results of the learning, must be demonstrated through assessment.

National Standards

Units must be mapped to National Occupational Standards where possible. Where no National Occupational Standards exist. Levels 1, 2 and 3 should be mapped to Key Skills Standards or equivalent.

Title

The unit title must be relevant, clear and unambiguous and reflect the content of the unit.

Titles should not contain numbers, references to level (e.g. Basic, Foundation, Intermediate, Advanced, etc.), methods of assessment or other extraneous detail.

If it is problematic to identify a title that clearly summarises the achievement in the unit, this may suggest an incoherent group of learning outcomes.

Level

Each unit should be assigned a level which is determined by referencing the learning outcomes and assessment criteria against a set of level descriptors (see below). These level descriptors are intended to provide broad definitions, rather than to be prescriptive – level depends on a wide range of factors. As a level represents a band within a developmental continuum, it is also difficult to provide definitive boundaries between levels. It may be useful in the unit-writing process to cross-reference/benchmark against existing units at adjacent levels.

If you need help in deciding upon the level of the units that you are developing level descriptors are available in the QCA document Level Descriptors for Positioning Units in the Qualifications and Credit Framework Test and Trials – www.qca.org.uk Document reference number QCA/07/3412

Credit Value

All units have an ascribed credit value. One credit represents a notional 10 hours of learning time regardless of the level of the unit.

Learning Outcomes

In identifying outcomes, the following questions should be addressed 'What do learners need to know, understand or be able to do, as a result of this learning experience?'

The answer to these questions should take the form of a series of broad statements that may include the following phrases:

The learner will: (this is a standard rider on all units)

- Understand
- Recognise
- Know
- Design
- Perform
- Create
- Use (if appropriate for practical application)

Learning outcomes should:

- be short and succinct statements that describe a piece of knowledge or a skill without qualitative or quantitative additions. In other words, the language used for learning outcomes should be relatively neutral;
- describe the results of a learning process rather than the learning process itself;
- be a coherent group of statements that relate to each other and to the title of the units, and avoid repetition and overlap.

Learning outcomes may remain the same at adjacent levels, for example, Level 1 and Level 2, thus creating parallel or 'sibling' units. If units cover a range of levels, it may be necessary to modify, add or delete outcomes that are not achievable at the lower levels or are assumed/subsumed at the higher levels.

Although learning outcomes express the knowledge, skills and understanding learners are expected to acquire, they do not contain the qualitative detail that expresses the range, the degree of complexity or the degree of autonomy, and which defines the level. This detail is contained within the unit's Assessment Criteria.

Whilst the number of learning outcomes is not prescribed, it is important to remember that all outcomes must be assessed for the learner to achieve the unit and it is not necessary to assess everything the learner knows/understands/does.

Assessment Criteria

Assessment Criteria describe precisely what a learner is expected to be able to do in order to prove that s/he has achieved the learning outcome. They should be measurable and indicate the standard expected when the learner is assessed. Appropriate language must be used as it is the criteria that reflect the range, degree of autonomy and degree of complexity associated with the level.

- Where the same unit exists at different levels, the Assessment Criteria should be clearly differentiated to reflect the increasing complexity involved in progressing from one level to the next.
- The Assessment Criteria should relate to a specific Learning Outcome and there should be sufficient Assessment Criteria to enable evidence of achievement for assessment and moderation.
- There should be at least one Assessment Criterion related to each Learning Outcome.
- There should be no new learning described in the Assessment Criteria that is not already described in the Learning Outcomes.
- Criteria should be written so that they are applicable and appropriate to a range of assessment methods. This will allow tutors to determine the most appropriate form of assessment if the unit is used within another course. Assessment criteria must be clear and consistent in their own right and should not rely on comparative judgments.