



PART OF **nocn** GROUP

## QUALIFICATION SPECIFICATION

### **NOCN Level 3 Award in Research Skills for Academic Study**

Qualification No: 600/5742/7

#### **Operational Start Date**

1 June 2012

#### **Version**

2.1 – March 2019

#### **To know more about NOCN:**

- Visit the NOCN website: [www.nocn.org.uk](http://www.nocn.org.uk)
- Call the Customer Service Team: **0300 999 1177**

[www.nocn.org.uk](http://www.nocn.org.uk)

## Introduction

NOCN has been providing a qualification and accreditation service to providers across the UK for over 25 years and is justifiably proud of its reputation as, "...a provider of fully accessible, trusted and flexible qualification and accreditation services".

Over the years, NOCN has worked effectively with centres for the benefit of learners across the country, with a mutual interest in providing a continuously improving service. NOCN, whilst retaining all the advantages of being a national body, has always provided a personal, bespoke service to its customers and prides itself on its local presence and expertise within communities.

This document details the qualification specification and provides guidance to the training provider on assessment criteria and evidence requirements.



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## 1. About the qualification

The NOCN Level 3 Award in Research Skills for Academic Study will enable learners to understand how to undertake research. It is aimed at those learners who either are already on a Level 3 course of learning or who are preparing to undertake Level 3 learning. The skills and knowledge gained from undertaking the qualification will help those learners both on their Level 3 course and as they progress to Level 4.

The NOCN Level 3 Award in Research Skills for Academic Study provides learners with an understanding of:

- how to plan their research;
- the appropriate research methods to use;
- the reliability of a range of information sources;
- the appropriate use of information;
- plagiarism, bibliographies and referencing.

### Guided Learning Hours

Guided Learning Hours (GLH) are a guide to the amount of teacher-supervised or directed study time a learner will need to complete the learning needed for a qualification. NOCN recognises that every learner is different and the actual time taken may vary beyond the maximum and minimum shown.

Training providers not reliant on public funding measured by GLH may find them a useful guide to the recommended length of a programme of study. The learning hours can be divided in any way, for example, a 20 GLH hour programme could be delivered in 2 hours a week for 10 weeks or 8 hours a day for 3 days, depending on the course and learners.

The total recommended guided learning hours is 14.

### Total Qualification Time (TQT)

Through consultation with users, TQT has been agreed by considering the total number of learning hours required for the average learner to achieve this qualification.

The Total Qualification Time is 20.

TQT is split into two areas:

- Guided Learning Hours (GLH):
  - learning activity under the immediate guidance or supervision of a lecturer, supervisor, tutor or other appropriate provider of education or training
  - includes the activity of being assessed if the assessment takes place under the immediate guidance or supervision of a lecturer, supervisor, tutor or other appropriate provider of education or training.
- Other Learning Hours (OLH):

- an estimate of the number of hours a learner will spend, as directed by (but not under the immediate guidance or supervision of) a lecturer, supervisor, tutor or other appropriate provider of education or training, including:
  - preparatory work
  - self-study
  - or any other form of education or training, including assessment.

Examples of GLH activities include:

- Classroom-based learning supervised by a teacher
- Work-based learning supervised by a teacher
- Live webinar or telephone tutorial with a teach in real time
- E-learning supervised by a teacher in real time
- All forms of assessment which take place under the immediate guidance or supervision of an appropriate provider of training
- Exam time

Examples of OLH activities include:

- Independent and unsupervised research/learning
- Unsupervised compilation of a portfolio of work experience
- Unsupervised e-learning
- Unsupervised e-assessment
- Unsupervised coursework
- Watching a pre-recorded podcast or webinar
- Unsupervised work-based learning

The agreed Total Qualification Time has been used to identify the qualification's Credit Value.

### **Language Requirements**

If you wish to offer this qualification in Welsh or Irish (Gaeilge) then please contact NOCN who will review demand and provide as appropriate.

### **Northern Ireland Entitlement Framework**

For more information on the Entitlement Framework, centres in Northern Ireland should contact OCN NI [www.ocnni.org.uk](http://www.ocnni.org.uk).

## 2. Who the qualification is for

The NOCN Level 3 Award in Research Skills for Academic Study is aimed at:

- Learners who about to undertake Level 3 studies;
- Learners undertaking Level 3 studies;
- Learners preparing to undertake Level 4 studies.

**The minimum age for access to the qualification is 14 years old.**

The qualification is particularly suitable for:

- Those learners who intend to progress to Level 4 study in any subject area;
- Those learners who progress to studying vocational subjects.

In the delivery of NOCN units to learners where age restrictions have been removed, centres are required to exercise due diligence in respect of the following:

- The learner's needs and access to information and advice about the units offered and how the course of learning will meet their needs;
- The learner's present capacity to undertake the tasks set by tutors, and tutors understanding of how particular tasks accord with the assessment criteria for the unit;
- Tutors should be fully conversant with the qualification specification for the unit offered to learners, and avail themselves of the NOCN external verifier provision of further advice and guidance in the delivery of units, where clarification is required; centres should consult the NOCN document Access to Fair Assessment Policy and Procedure which is available on the NOCN website;
- Centres will be required to have appropriate and up to date risk assessments and ensure that appropriate support and supervision is provided; appropriate specialist knowledge should be consulted where the possibility of any precipitate harm for learners or learners with particular characteristics is identified; NOCN may instigate consultation with the appropriate specialist where centres have not considered it necessary to do so or where it considers further specialist review is required;
- The centre contact for the unit/qualification being delivered must ensure that all procedures relating to the delivery of the unit/qualification operate effectively in the centre.

### Restrictions on Learner Entry

There are no restrictions of learner entry.

## **Entry Requirements**

There are no entry requirements although learners who have previously achieved at Level 2 or have comparable experience may be better prepared to achieve this qualification.

## **Recognition of Prior Learning**

Recognition of prior learning is an assessment method leading to the award of credit. The process involves considering if a learner can meet the specified assessment requirements for a unit through knowledge, understanding or skills that they possess already as a consequence of which they do not need to undertake a course of learning.

Centres are encouraged to recognise the previous achievements and experiences, both formal, for example through accredited units or qualifications or informal, for example through continuous learning. This involves the recognition of achievement from a range of activities that will have been assessed through any valid method of assessment. When using the process of the recognition of prior learning, it is essential that the assessment requirements of a specific unit or, more exceptionally, a qualification have been met. The evidence of learning provided must be sufficient, reliable, authentic and valid. Evidence is not time-limited.

**QCF Level Descriptors**

| Level                 | Summary  | Knowledge and understanding   | Application and action   | Autonomy and accountability  |
|-----------------------|--|---|--|--|
| <p><b>Level 3</b></p> | <p>Achievement at level 3 reflects the ability to identify and use relevant understanding, methods and skills to complete tasks and address problems that, while well defined, have a measure of complexity. It includes taking responsibility for initiating and completing tasks and procedures as well as exercising autonomy and judgment within limited parameters. It also reflects awareness of different perspectives or approaches within an area of study or work.</p> | <p>Use factual, procedural and theoretical understanding to complete tasks and address problems that, while well defined, may be complex and non-routine.</p> <p>Interpret and evaluate relevant information and ideas.</p> <p>Be aware of the nature of the area of study or work.</p> <p>Have awareness of different perspectives or approaches within the area of study or work.</p> | <p>Address problems that, while well defined, may be complex and non-routine.</p> <p>Identify, select and use appropriate skills, methods and procedures.</p> <p>Use appropriate investigation to inform actions.</p> <p>Review how effective methods and actions have been.</p> | <p>Take responsibility for initiating and completing tasks and procedures, including, where relevant, responsibility for supervising or guiding others.</p> <p>Exercise autonomy and judgment within limited parameters.</p> |

*Extracted from QCF level descriptor's document on QCDA's website October 2008*



## Progression Opportunities

The NOCN Level 3 Award in Research Skills for Academic Study enables progression to employment, further learning opportunities within employment, or further study. It supports learners who are preparing to move on to Level 4 study.

## Learners with Particular Requirements

If you are a NOCN Recognised Centre and have learners with particular requirements, please see the **NOCN Reasonable Adjustments Policy and Procedure** found on the NOCN website at [www.nocn.org.uk](http://www.nocn.org.uk)

This policy gives clear guidance on the reasonable adjustments and arrangements that can be made to take account of disability or learning difficulty without compromising the assessment criteria.

The NOCN Centre Recognition process requires the centre to hold policy statements on Equal Opportunities, Diversity and Disability Discrimination which will be reviewed by NOCN. Please contact [assurance@nocn.org.uk](mailto:assurance@nocn.org.uk) for further details.

### 3. Achieving the qualification

#### Rules of Combination

In order to achieve the qualification, the learner must:

- Successfully complete the 2 credit mandatory unit Research Skills for Academic Study.

#### Achievement Methodology

The qualifications are awarded to learners who successfully achieve the unit. Assessment for the unit is designed by the Centre in accordance with the NOCN Assessment Definitions Document. There is no further assessment to achieve the qualification.

In summary:

- Assessments are set by the Centre;
- Assessments are approved by the Centre;
- Assessments are marked by the Centre;
- Assessments are internally verified;
- Assessments are externally verified;

#### 4. The qualification units

|                                 |   |
|---------------------------------|---|
| <b>Unit Title:</b>              | <b>Research Skills for Academic Study</b> |
| <b>Unit Level:</b>              | <b>Three</b>                              |
| <b>Unit Credit Value:</b>       | <b>2</b>                                  |
| <b>GLH:</b>                     | <b>14</b>                                 |
| <b>Unique Reference Number:</b> | <b>H/503/3639</b>                         |

| <b>LEARNING OUTCOMES</b>   | <b>ASSESSMENT CRITERIA</b>  |
|--|---|
| <b>The learner will:</b>   | <b>The learner can:</b>   |
| 1. Understand how to plan research on a given topic.                                       | 1.1. Establish the purpose of the research.<br>1.2. Analyse the nature of the research to be undertaken.<br>1.3. Identify and justify appropriate methods of research.  |
| 2. Be able to assess the reliability of a range of different types of information sources. | 2.1. Evaluate a range of information sources taking account of reliability, for example, a reference book, a newspaper article or periodical, a webpage.  |
| 3. Be able to utilise information to inform own writing.                                   | 3.1. Explain ways of using information gained, for example, quotation, paraphrase and explanation.<br>3.2. Define the meaning of “plagiarism” and analyse the consequences of its use.<br>3.3. Explain the importance of footnotes/endnotes and bibliographies.<br>3.4. Demonstrate the use of information from a range of sources to inform own writing. |

An explanation of the kind of activity, assessment and evidence expected at the appropriate level is given below.

### Written Description

Consideration of a particular subject, situation or example selected by the tutor or by learners, which enables learners to apply knowledge to specific situations and to present them in written format.

The learning may be assessed by:

- Tutor.
- One to one tutorial.
- Discussion.

Evidence could include:

- Tutor record of observation.
- Learner notes.
- Tutorial notes.
- Completed report.
- Charts.
- Plans.

|                | <b>Activity</b>  | <b>Assessment</b>  | <b>Evidence</b>   |
|----------------|--|--|---|
| <b>Level 3</b> | Subjects should allow the application of knowledge in a range of complex areas, in a variety of familiar and unfamiliar context.<br>GL = 1000 words. | Assessment through self-assessment and tutor assessment. | Evidence could be; tutor record, learner record, summary of feedback or completed work. |

Forms and guidance for gathering learner evidence against the individual assessment criteria are available for download in Word format on the NOCN website:

[http://www.nocn.org.uk/qualifications\\_and\\_units/additional\\_qualification\\_documents](http://www.nocn.org.uk/qualifications_and_units/additional_qualification_documents).

Alternatively, centres can use their own paperwork provided they ensure that the learners' work is ordered and portfolio references provided as required.

## 5. How the qualification is assessed

The qualifications require achievement of the specified units with no further requirements for additional/summative assessment. Achievement is therefore determined by successful completion of unit assessment. The assessment process is as follows:

- Assessments are internally set at the Centre by assessors, against the requirements detailed in the assessment criteria of the unit
- The learners are assessed internally at the Centre, using the assessments set
- The resulting portfolios of assessed evidence are internally verified by an internal verifier at the Centre
- The portfolios of assessed evidence are externally verified by an external verifier appointed by NOCN.

### 5.1 Unit Assessment

Achievement of units is through internally set, internally marked, internally verified and externally verified tasks, as detailed above. Centres devise assessment activities to meet the specified assessment criteria detailed in each unit, guided by the Assessment Information Grid which accompanies each unit and the NOCN Assessment Definitions Document. The activity or activities set must enable the learners to meet the standards detailed in the assessment criteria. Centre devised assessments should be scrutinised by the Internal Verifier before use to ensure that they are fit for purpose. Centre devised assessments will be scrutinised by the external verifier to ensure reliability and validity of assessment.

### 5.2 Marking Tasks

Each task must be marked against the identified assessment criteria in the unit and judged to be either achieved or not achieved. Where a series of tasks is set, learners must demonstrate the achievement of the required standard identified in the assessment criteria in all tasks in order to achieve the unit credit. All of the assessment criteria in a unit must be met before the unit is deemed achieved. The unit achievement is not banded or graded; units are either achieved or not achieved.

### 5.3 Recording Achievement

You must record each learner's performance in each unit on an appropriate form or forms. The form/s should record the learner's performance against the unit assessment criteria evidenced by the task.

### 5.4 Standardisation

Centres will be required to provide samples of assessment tasks for NOCN and standardisation activity.

## 6. Offering the qualification

### Recognised Centres

If you are already recognised to offer NOCN qualifications and would like more information contact: [business-enquiries@nocn.org.uk](mailto:business-enquiries@nocn.org.uk).

If you are ready to add the qualification to your curriculum offer, please log in to the NOCN website, under Centres/Processes and Documents, and complete the 'Additional Qualification Approval Request Form,' which can then be returned to [business-enquiries@nocn.org.uk](mailto:business-enquiries@nocn.org.uk) for the attention of your Account and Sector Manager.

### New Centres

If you are interested in offering this qualification, but are not yet a NOCN Approved Centre and would like more information about becoming a NOCN centre and offering this qualification please see **Become a Registered Centre** on our website <https://www.nocn.org.uk/customers/nocn-centres/> and click Become a Centre

## 7. Quality Assurance and National Standardisation

### 7.1 General Information

All Centres wishing to deliver the qualification, or units of the qualification, will need to demonstrate the ability to manage and deliver the units and/or the qualification, including adherence to quality assurance and assessment regulations.

NOCN will provide guidance and give support in enabling you to use the qualification.

The NOCN standard quality assurance arrangements and requirements include:

- Internal verification
- External verification
- Standardisation.

### External Quality Assurance

Once recognised as a Centre, NOCN will allocate an External Quality Assurer. The External Quality Assurer will have ongoing responsibility for monitoring the Centre's compliance with the requirements of centre recognised status.

The External Quality Assurer will make regular visits to all Centres. During these visits he/she will:

- Monitor the Centre's compliance with the Centre Recognition agreement by reviewing course documentation, meeting managers, tutors, internal quality assurers, learners and administrative staff.
- Verify recommendations for achievement submitted by the centre via Quartzweb.

Refer to the **NOCN Quality Assurance User Guide** for further information on the External Quality Assurance process.

### 7.2 Standardisation

Standardisation is a process that promotes consistency in the understanding and application of standards, as it:

- establishes statements on the standard of evidence required to meet the assessment criteria for the units in NOCN qualifications
- makes recommendations on assessment practice
- produces advice and guidance for the assessment of units
- identifies good practice in assessment.

It is a requirement of the Centre Recognition Process that each Centre offering the units from the qualification must contribute assessment materials and learners' evidence for NOCN standardisation if requested.

NOCN will notify Centres of the required sample for standardisation purposes. Assessment materials, learners' evidence and tutor feedback will be collected by External Verifiers on behalf of NOCN.

Outcomes from standardisation will be available to Centres through NOCN.





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