



Qualification Specification for:

OCN NI Entry Level Certificate in Essential Skills – Adult Literacy

➤ **Qualification No: 601/8226/X**

Qualification Regulation Information

Qualification Number: 601/8226/X
Operational start date: 01 January 2016
Operational end date: 31 December 2027
Certification end date: 31 December 2028

All OCN NI Qualifications are published to Ofqual's Register of Regulated Qualifications (<http://register.ofqual.gov.uk/>). This database contains details of the available regulated qualifications, units and structures.

OCN NI Contact Details

Open College Network Northern Ireland (OCN NI)
Sirius House
10 Heron Road
Belfast
BT3 9LE

Phone: 028 90463990
Web: www.ocnni.org.uk

Foreword

This document explains OCN NI's requirements for the delivery and assessment of the following qualification:

OCN NI Entry Level Certificate in Essential Skills – Adult Literacy

This specification sets out:

- Centre requirements for delivering and assessing the qualification
- The structure and content of the qualification
- Assessment requirements for the qualification
- OCN NI's quality assurance arrangements for the qualification

The specification also makes reference to:

- Department for Employment and Learning and Education and Training Inspectorate requirements for the delivery of the qualification in Northern Ireland.

OCN NI will notify centres in writing of any major changes to this specification. We will also publish changes on our website at www.ocnni.org.uk

This specification is provided online, so the version available on our website is the most up to date publication. It is important to note that copies of the specification that have been downloaded and printed may be different from this authoritative online version.

Contents

Introduction.....	6
The Essential Skills for Living Strategy	6
Essential Skills Qualifications at a Glance.....	6
Qualification Summary: OCN NI Entry Level Certificate in Essential Skills	
– Adult Literacy.....	7
Progression Opportunities.....	7
Qualification Target Group	7
Entry Requirements.....	7
Initial Assessment	7
Delivery Languages.....	7
Centre requirements for delivering the qualification.....	8
Centre Recognition and Qualification Approval.....	8
Centre Staffing	8
Qualifications requirements for teaching Essential Skills	8
Developing Essential Skills programmes and activities.....	8
Structure and Content.....	9
Sub-skills.....	9
Sub-levels	9
Scheme of Assessment.....	15
Guidance: delivery and assessment.....	15
Assessment Materials	16
Central Assessment Bank	16
Assessment tasks	16
Administering the task	17
Determining qualification level for award.....	18
Security of External Assessment.....	19
Retention of Evidence	20
Certification	20
Charges.....	20

Quality Assurance of Centre Performance	21
Internal Verification.....	21
External Verification	21
Standardisation	22
OCN NI Support for Essential Skills	23
Equality, Fairness and Inclusion.....	23

Introduction

The Essential Skills for Living Strategy

The Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) launched the Essential Skills for Living Strategy and action plan in April 2002. The aim of this strategy was to improve adult literacy and numeracy (and later Information & Communication Technology (ICT)) in Northern Ireland.

DEL's vision for the strategy was:

"To provide opportunities for adults to update their essential skills to assist them in improving their overall quality of life, personal development and their employment opportunities and by so doing to promote greater economic development, social inclusion and cohesion"

A suite of Essential Skills qualifications was developed as part of this strategy. The suite of qualifications comprises qualifications from Entry level up to Level 2 in literacy/communication and numeracy/application of number, and qualifications at Level 1 and 2 in ICT. The qualifications were designed to be suitable for learners in education, training, work and everyday life situations who would like to gain a nationally accredited qualification,

NB Essential Skills qualifications are part of post-16 learning pathways in Northern Ireland and are mandatory within Apprenticeships NI frameworks.

Essential Skills Qualifications at a Glance

Title and Level	Qualification Number
Entry Level Certificate in Essential Skills – Adult Literacy (Entry 1-3)	601/8226/X
Entry Level Certificate in Essential Skills – Adult Numeracy (Entry 1-3)	601/8225/8
Level 1 Certificate in Essential Skills – Application of Number	601/8943/5
Level 1 Certificate in Essential Skills – Communication	601/8941/1
Level 1 Certificate in Essential Skills – Information and Communication Technology	601/8213/1
Level 2 Certificate in Essential Skills – Application of Number	601/8944/7
Level 2 Certificate in Essential Skills – Communication	601/8942/3
Level 2 Certificate in Essential Skills – Information and Communication Technology	601/8214/3

Qualification Summary: OCN NI Entry Level Certificate in Essential Skills – Adult Literacy

The aim of this qualification is to improve the learners' ability to:

- speak, listen and respond, i.e. the development of the ability to express and communicate meaning in spoken language and to interpret what others say, matching style and purpose to audience and context;
- read and comprehend, i.e. the development of the ability to read, understand and engage with various types of text for enjoyment and learning;
- write to communicate, i.e. the development of the ability to make and shape text in order to communicate meaning in written language, appropriate to context, purpose, reader and audience.

Progression Opportunities

The OCN NI Entry Level Certificate in Essentials Skills – Adult Literacy enables progression to the OCN NI Level 1 Certificate in Essential Skills – Communication, GCSE English and to other recognised qualifications at level 1 and above.

Qualification Target Group

The qualification is targeted at learners who:

- wish to develop further skills in literacy
- wish to progress in education, training and/or employment
- wish to improve their personal development and life skills

Entry Requirements

There are no formal entry requirements for this qualification however centres must ensure that the level of the qualification is suitable for the learners. See 'Initial Assessment' below.

Initial Assessment

The centre should undertake an initial assessment of each learner before commencement of the course to ensure the learner is working towards the appropriate level of Essential Skills qualification. Centres are expected to develop their own approaches to initial assessment based on best practice. Tutors should be familiar with the DEL advice on initial assessment. See also guidance in 'Using the Adult Literacy and Adult Numeracy core curriculum in Northern Ireland' 2002

Delivery Languages

This qualification is available in English only

Centre requirements for delivering the qualification

Centre Recognition and Qualification Approval

Existing OCN NI Recognised centres must apply for and be granted approval to deliver the qualification prior to the commencement of delivery. New centres must apply and be granted OCN NI Recognised Centre status and qualification approval prior to delivery of the qualification.

Centre Staffing

Centres are required to have the following roles in place as a minimum, although a member of staff may hold more than one role*:

- Centre contact
- Essential Skills Co-ordinator
- Tutor
- Assessor
- Internal Verifier

*Note: A person cannot be an internal verifier for their own assessments.

Qualifications requirements for teaching Essential Skills

Centres must ensure that staff delivering and assessing the qualification are both qualified and competent. They should have a thorough understanding of the Adult Literacy core curriculum and an awareness of the National Standards for Adult Literacy.

DEL policy specifies minimum qualification requirements for Essential Skills teachers. As and where specified by DEL, centres must ensure that their teaching staff meet the requirements of the DEL Tutor Education Policy.

Developing Essential Skills programmes and activities

Essential Skills qualifications have been designed to enable centres to develop programmes and learning activities within a wide range of contexts suited to the needs of the learners. This might include: vocational education/training, employment, everyday living, social or leisure activities, volunteering. This is not an exhaustive list.

Whatever context is used to underpin the learning programme the developmental activities within the programme should be based on the Adult Literacy core curriculum.

The Education and Training Inspectorate expect Essential Skills communication learning programmes to be based on the Adult Literacy core curriculum. Staff should refer to 'Using the Adult Literacy and Adult Numeracy core curriculum in Northern Ireland' 2002.

Structure and Content

Sub-skills

The Entry Level Certificate in Essential Skills – Adult Literacy has three skill components:

- Speak, listen and respond
- Read and comprehend
- Write to communicate

Learners must demonstrate competence in all 3 skills areas in order to be awarded an entry level qualification. An award cannot be made for achievement of only one or two of the skills areas.

Sub-levels

Entry Level Essential Skills has 3 sub levels, ie Entry 1, Entry 2 and Entry 3. The Adult Literacy Core Curriculum makes clear links between the sub-levels and the teaching and learning of the skills, knowledge and understanding required to meet the standards.

The standards for Entry 1, Entry 2 and Entry 3 are detailed on the following pages.

Entry 1 Standards

Title	OCN NI Entry Level Certificate in Essential Skills – Adult Literacy
Level	Entry 1
Guided Learning Hours (GLH)	40
OCN NI Unit Code	
Unit Reference No	H/507/9651
Standard	Learners will be expected to
Speak, listen and respond	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • listen and respond to spoken language, including simple narratives, statements, questions and single-step instructions • speak to communicate basic information, feelings and opinions on familiar topics • engage in discussion with another person in a familiar situation about familiar topics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • listen for the gist of short explanations • listen for detail using key words to extract some specific information • follow single-step instructions in a familiar context, asking for instructions to be repeated if necessary • listen and respond to requests for personal information • speak clearly to be heard and understood in simple exchanges • make requests using appropriate terms • ask questions to obtain specific information • make statements of fact clearly • speak and listen in simple exchanges and everyday contexts in simple and familiar formal exchanges connected with education, training, work and social roles
Read and comprehend	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • read and understand short texts with repeated language patterns on familiar topics • read and obtain information from common signs and symbols 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • follow a short narrative on a familiar topic or experience • recognise the different purposes of texts at this level • possess a limited, meaningful sight vocabulary of words, signs and symbols • decode simple, regular words • recognise the letters of the alphabet in both upper and lower case in texts such as public signs and notices, lists, forms, records, simple narratives
Write to communicate	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • write to communicate information to an intended audience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use written words and phrases to record or present information • construct a simple sentence • punctuate a simple sentence with a capital letter and a full stop • use a capital letter for personal pronoun 'I' • spell correctly some personal key words and familiar words

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> write the letters of the alphabet using upper and lower case in documents such as forms, lists, messages, notes, records
--	--

Entry 2 Standards

Title	OCN NI Entry Level Certificate in Essential Skills – Adult Literacy	
Level	Entry 2	
Guided Learning Hours (GLH)	40	
OCN NI Unit Code		
Unit Reference No	H/507/9651	
Standard	Learners will be expected to	
Speak, listen and respond		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> listen and respond to spoken language, including straightforward information, short narratives, explanations and instructions speak to communicate information, feelings and opinions on familiar topics engage in discussion with one or more people in a familiar situation to establish shared understanding about familiar topics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> listen for and follow the gist of explanations, instructions and narratives listen for detail in short explanations, instructions and narratives listen for and identify the main points of short explanations or presentations listen to and follow short, straightforward explanations and instructions listen to and identify simply expressed feelings and opinions speak clearly to be heard and understood in straightforward exchanges make requests and ask questions to obtain information in everyday contexts respond to straightforward questions express clearly statements of fact and short accounts and descriptions ask questions to clarify understanding follow the gist of discussions follow the main points and make appropriate contributions to the discussion in straightforward familiar formal exchanges connected with education, training, work and social roles 	
Read and comprehend		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> read and understand short, straightforward texts on familiar topics read and obtain information from short documents, familiar sources and signs and symbols 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> trace and understand the main events of chronological and instructional texts recognise the different purposes of texts at this level identify common sources of information use illustrations and captions to locate information read and understand linking words and adverbials in instructions and directions, eg next, then, right and straight on read and understand words on forms related to personal information, eg first name, surname, address, postcode, age, date of birth recognise high frequency words and words with common spelling patterns use phonic and graphic knowledge to decode words use a simplified dictionary to find the meaning of unfamiliar words use initial letters to find and sequence words in alphabetical order in texts such as public signs and notices, lists, forms, notes, records, e-mails, simple narratives, letters and diagrams 	
Write to communicate		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> write to communicate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> use written words and phrases to record or present information 	

information with some awareness of the intended audience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • construct simple and compound sentences, using common conjunctions to connect two clauses, eg <i>as</i>, <i>and</i>, <i>but</i> • use adjectives • use punctuation correctly, eg <i>capital letters</i>, <i>full stops and question marks</i> • use a capital letter for proper nouns • spell correctly the majority of personal details and familiar common words • produce legible text in documents such as forms, lists, messages, notes, records, e-mails, simple narratives
--	--

Entry 3 Standards

Title	OCN NI Entry Level Certificate in Essential Skills – Adult Literacy	
Level	Entry 3	
Guided Learning Hours (GLH)	40	
OCN NI Unit Code		
Unit Reference No	H/507/9651	
Standard	Learners will be expected to	
Speak, listen and respond		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • listen and respond to spoken language, including straightforward information and narratives, and follow straightforward explanations and instructions, both face-to-face and on the telephone • speak to communicate information, feelings and opinions on familiar topics, using appropriate formality, both face-to-face and on the telephone • engage in discussion with one or more people in a familiar situation, making relevant points and responding to what others say to reach a shared understanding about familiar topics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • listen for and follow the gist of explanations, instructions and narratives in different contexts • listen for detail in explanations, instructions and narratives in different contexts • listen for and identify relevant information and new information from discussions, explanations and presentations • use strategies to clarify and confirm understanding, eg facial expressions or gestures • listen to and respond appropriately to other points of view • speak clearly to be heard and understood using appropriate clarity, speed and phrasing • use formal language and register when appropriate • respond to a range of questions about familiar topics • express clearly statements of fact and give short explanations, accounts and descriptions • make requests and ask questions to obtain information in familiar and unfamiliar contexts • follow and understand the main points of discussions on different topics • make contributions to discussions that are relevant to the subject • respect the turn-taking rights of others during discussions in familiar formal exchanges connected with education, training, work and social roles 	
Read and comprehend		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • read and understand short, straightforward texts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • trace and understand the main events of chronological, continuous descriptive and explanatory texts of more than one paragraph • recognise the different purposes of texts at this level 	

<p>on familiar topics accurately and independently</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• read and obtain information from everyday sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• recognise and understand the organisational features and typical language of instructional texts, eg <i>use of imperatives and second person</i>• identify the main points and ideas and predict words from context• understand and use organisational features to locate information, eg <i>contents, index, menus</i>• skim read title, headings, and illustrations to decide if material is of interest• scan texts to locate information• obtain specific information through detailed reading• relate an image to print and use it to obtain meaning• recognise and understand relevant specialist key words• read and understand words and phrases commonly used on forms• use a dictionary to find the meaning of unfamiliar words• use first and second place letters to find and sequence words in alphabetical order in texts such as forms, notes, records, e-mails, narratives, letters, diagrams, simple instructions, short reports
---	---

Write to communicate

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• write to communicate information and opinions with some adaptation to the intended audience | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• plan and draft writing• organise writing in short paragraphs• sequence chronological writing• write in complete sentences• use correct basic grammar, eg appropriate verb tense, subject verb agreement• use punctuation correctly, eg <i>capital letters, full stops, question marks, exclamation marks</i>• spell correctly common words and relevant key words for work and special interest• proof read and correct writing for grammar and spelling• produce legible text in texts such as forms, notes, records, e-mails, narratives, letters, diagrams, simple instructions, short reports |
|--|---|

Scheme of Assessment

To achieve the qualification, learners must be assessed against the Entry Level Adult Literacy standards for each of the 3 skills:

- Speaking and Listening
- Reading
- Writing

Assessment 100% Externally set task

One unseen, contextualised assessment task drawn from a bank of tasks.

Externally set, internally marked and externally moderated.

Each task can be taken only once but there are no restrictions upon the number of tasks a candidate can take.

Normally 60-90 minutes duration to complete all elements of the task.
Taken in the normal learning environment but under controlled conditions.

Each Literacy sub-skill is equally weighted. There are differentiated outcomes at Entry 1, 2 and 3. The pass threshold for each sub-skill, at each level is set at 80% of the available marks.

The overall outcome is calculated using the lowest outcome for each sub-skill.

Guidance: delivery and assessment

OCN NI expects that learners will only be entered for an assessment task on completion of their planned programme of learning. OCN NI would expect the following to be in place:

- Initial assessment and diagnosis of individual learning needs and support requirements
- An individual learning plan developed in consultation with the learner and regularly updated through formative assessment.
- Development and practice of skills through appropriate and relevant tasks mapped against the Adult Literacy Core Curriculum
- Assessment to ensure learner readiness to engage with the externally set task at the appropriate level.

Assessment Materials

Central Assessment Bank

A central bank of external assessment materials is shared by all awarding organisations offering Entry Level Essential Skills. Each task is based around a topic relevant to adults and, where appropriate, some have a Northern Ireland context.

Approved Centres are provided with secure on-line access to OCN NI's bank of tasks.

Assessment tasks

The externally set tasks have been designed to provide a summative assessment of the achievement of adult learners and are based on activities which these learners may come across in their everyday lives.

The tasks are designed to confirm the tutor's judgement of the level of achievement at which a learner is working and should only be administered when the tutor is satisfied that the learner's work has reached the appropriate standard.

Each task covers:

- all 3 sub-levels at Entry level, i.e. Entry 1, Entry 2, Entry 3;
- all 3 literacy skills, i.e. Speaking and Listening, Reading and Writing;
- a minimum of 70% of the core curriculum elements at the appropriate levels.

Differentiation in the tasks is by outcome.

Assessment task

The task materials are in the form of:

- a Student Answer Booklet at either Entry 1 or Entry 2 and 3
- a Tutor Guide and Tutor Script
- an Assessment Scheme in which the marks for each activity are recorded and an overall level is allocated

Guidelines for use are included in each booklet.

A sample task [Giant's Causeway] is available at all sub levels. This can be used for learner practice purposes but cannot form part of the qualification assessment.

Administering the task

The tasks are intended to be taken by a learner in his/her normal learning environment

A task will normally take between 60-90 minutes to complete if taken in one sitting. However OCN NI would recommend that the tasks are taken in 3 separate sessions. The elements of each task should be taken consecutively with no further teaching taking place between activities.

Detailed guidelines for the use of the tasks are contained in the Tutor Guide and Tutor Script available with each task. However, the following points should be noted:

- It is the assessor's responsibility to ensure that an external task at the appropriate level is undertaken by the learner.
- The assessment task is undertaken within the learner's normal learning environment, which must be supervised.
- The task is taken unseen by the learner. These assessments are confidential materials. If a task is taken across more than one session the tutor must ensure that all materials associated with the assessment task are brought in at the end of each session and stored in a secure place until required again.
- The learner completes the work unaided except for any assistance allowed for in the tutor guidance document accompanying the task.
- The assessment task is marked by the tutor according to the mark scheme.
- The task must be fully achieved in order to meet the requirement for the achievement of the qualification.
- All work submitted will be subject to centre internal verification and to external verification by OCN NI.

Determining qualification level for award

The Assessment Scheme allows for the tutor to create a learner’s achievement across the three skill areas and record the level the learner has demonstrated in each of the activities.

In order to achieve an overall level in Entry Level literacy a learner must achieve that level in all three skill areas.

Where a learner achieves a range of levels in an assessment task then the overall level is based on the lowest level achieved across the three skills areas.

See the matrix below

Sub-skill outcomes			Overall Level to be awarded
1	1	1	1
1	1	2	1
1	1	3	1
1	2	2	1
1	2	3	1
2	2	2	2
2	2	3	2
3	3	1	1
3	3	2	2
3	3	3	3

Security of External Assessment

- External assessment task booklets must be retained in a secure location.
- External assessment task booklets must never be used for diagnostic assessment or teaching purposes. Nor should they be used as preparation for the externally set assessment. Failure of any Centre to adhere to this directive will result in the task being declared invalid and being withdrawn from the Task Bank.
- External assessment task booklets must be given to learners at the beginning of a designated and agreed assessment period.

- Completed external assessment booklets must be collected in at the end of the designated assessment period, marked and retained by the Centre.
- At no point should the completed external tasks be removed from the Centre, unless for external verification purposes.
- Completed tasks must not be returned to the learner.

- Tasks, other than those designated for retention purposes, must be securely destroyed once they are no longer required for verification.

Retention of Evidence

OCN NI has published guidance for centres on the retention of evidence. Details are provided in the OCN NI Centre Handbook and can be accessed via the OCN NI website.

Certification

Certificates will be sent to centres within 20 working days of receipt of correctly completed results marksheets. It is the responsibility of the centre to ensure that certificates received from OCN NI are held securely and distributed to learners promptly and securely.

Charges

OCN NI publishes all up to date qualification fees in its Fees and Invoicing Policy document. Further information can be found on the OCN NI website.

Quality Assurance of Centre Performance

Internal Verification

The delivery and assessment of the qualification must be scrutinised through the centre's internal quality assurance processes as part of the Recognised Centre agreement with OCN NI. The centre must appoint an experienced and trained centre internal verifier whose responsibility is to act as the internal quality monitor for the verification of the delivery and assessment of the qualification.

The Centre must agree a working model for internal verification with OCN NI prior to delivery of any programme.

Internal Verifiers must:

- have direct or related relevant experience in assessment and verification
- attend OCN NI's internal verifier training in order to be approved by OCN NI
- support tutors and assessors through Centre standardisation meetings held within the Centre at appropriate points in the year and records maintained for the external verifier
- sample assessments according to the centre's sampling strategy
- ensure tasks are appropriate to the level being assessed
- maintain up-to-date records supporting the verification of assessment and learner achievement

External Verification

As this qualification requires learners to submit an externally assessed component, external verification must take place before certificates can be issued to the centre. External verification visits and monitoring activities will be conducted annually to confirm continued compliance with the conditions of recognition, review the centre's risk rating for the qualification and to assure OCN NI of the maintenance of the integrity of the qualification.

The External Verifier will review the delivery and assessment of the qualification. This will include the review of a sample of assessment evidence and evidence of the internal verification of assessment and assessment decisions. This will form the basis of the EV report and will inform OCN NI's annual assessment of centre compliance and risk.

The External Verifier is appointed by OCN NI.

Standardisation

As a process, standardisation is designed to ensure consistency and promote good practice in understanding and application of standards. Standardisation events:

- make qualified statements about the level of consistency in assessment across centres delivering a qualification
- make statements on the standard of evidence that is required to meet the assessment criteria for units in a qualification
- make recommendations on assessment practice
- produce advice and guidance for the assessment of units
- identify good practice in assessment and internal verification

Centres offering Essential Skills qualifications are required to attend standardisation events if requested. Centres will be requested to contribute assessment materials and learner evidence for the standardisation event.

Awarding Bodies offering Essential Skills in Northern Ireland work closely with CCEA Accreditation (the Regulator) to ensure the consistency of standards and practice.

OCN NI Support for Essential Skills

OCN NI provides the following support for Essential Skills:

- Exemplar assessment and support materials
- A section on the OCN NI website dedicated to Essential Skills
- Advice on the conduct and administration of Essential Skills
- Professional development events for assessors and internal verifiers
- Centre briefings/visits
- Support on becoming an accredited centre for Essential Skills
- Standardisation events

For further information about Essential Skills support contact OCN NI on 028 9046 3990.

Equality, Fairness and Inclusion

OCN NI has considered the requirements of equalities legislation in developing the specification for this qualification.

For further information and guidance relating to access to fair assessment and the OCN NI Reasonable Adjustments and Special Considerations policies, centres should refer to the OCN NI website.

OCN NI Entry Level Certificate in Essential Skills – Adult Literacy

Operational start date: 01 January 2016
Operational end date: 31 December 2027
Certification end date: 31 December 2028

Open College Network Northern Ireland (OCN NI)
Sirius House
10 Heron Road
Belfast
BT3 9LE

Phone: 028 90463990
Web: www.ocnni.org.uk