ocn northern ireland

Qualification Specification for:

OCN NI Level 1 Certificate in Essential Skills - Communication

- Qualification No: 601/8941/1

Qualification Regulation Information

Qualification Number: 601/8941/1

Operational start date: 1 September 2016
Operational end date: 31 December 2027
Certification end date: 31 December 2028

Qualification review and certification end dates are provided for all RQF qualifications to ensure that they remain current and valid. The review date is the last date by which learners may be registered on a qualification, and the certification end date is the last date their achievements can be certified. Learners have up to 1 year after the qualification review date to complete this qualification and claim their certificate.

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

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Foreword

About OCN NI

The Open College Network Northern Ireland (OCN NI) is a UK recognised Awarding Organisation based in Northern Ireland. We are regulated by Ofqual and CCEA Regulation to develop and award regulated qualifications from Entry Level up to and including Level 5 across all sector areas.

The Regulated Qualifications Framework

The Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF) was introduced on 1st October 2015 to replace the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF). The RQF is the single framework for describing all regulated qualifications in England and Northern Ireland.

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Introduction

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

OCN NI Level 1 Certificate in Essential Skills - Communication

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

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.

The History of Essential Skills

The Northern Ireland government launched its Essential Skills for Living Strategy in 2002. The aim of the strategy was to improve adult literacy, numeracy and Information & Communication Technology (ICT) in Northern Ireland. 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.

A review of Essential Skills level 1 & 2 Certificates in Communication and Application of Number was initiated in 2015 to refresh these particular qualifications and ensure they were suitable for learners from age 14 upwards. The result of this review is a set of revised specifications for the delivery of level 1 & 2 Communication and Application of Number from September 2016.

Essential Skills Qualifications at a Glance

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

Qualification Summary: OCN NI Level 1 Certificate in Essential Skills - Communication

Purpose of the qualification

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

- speak, listen, respond and engage in discussion
- read, obtain and understand information
- write to communicate

Progression Opportunities

The OCN NI Level 1 Certificate in Essentials Skills - Communication enables progression to the OCN NI Level 2 Certificate in Essential Skills – Communication and to other recognised qualifications at level 2 and above. This qualification will assist learners gain entry to employment.

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

Learners must be aged 14 or over to take this qualification. There are no subject specific 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

Centres should undertake screening and/or initial assessment of learners before commencement of the course to ensure learners are working towards the appropriate level of Essential Skills qualification. Centres are expected to develop their own approaches to screening/initial assessment based on best practice.

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 to teach Essential Skills in Northern Ireland and competent to do so. They should have a thorough understanding of the relevant core curriculum.

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: education & training, employment & the workplace, personal, social and community activities. 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 relevant core curriculum.

Structure and Content

Essential Skills Communication Level 1 has two components:

- Speaking and Listening
- Reading and Writing

Learners must pass both components to be awarded the qualification.
Learners must demonstrate that they meet the following standards.

Title	OCN NI Level 1 Certificate in Essential Skills - Communication	
Level	One	
Guided Learning Hours (GLH)	45	
Total Qualification Time (TQT)	60	
Skill Standard	**Coverage and range**	**Assessment**
Speaking & Listening 1. Take full part in formal and informal discussions and exchanges that include unfamiliar subjects	a) Make relevant and extended contributions to discussions, allowing for and responding to others' input; b) Prepare for and contribute to the formal discussion of ideas and opinions; c) Use an image to support discussion d) Make different kinds of contributions to discussions; e) Present information/points of view clearly and in appropriate language	**Controlled assessment** Internally set, internally marked and internally verified by the centre. Externally moderated by OCN NI.
Reading & Writing 2. Read and understand a range of straightforward texts	a) Identify the main points and ideas and how they are presented in a variety of texts; b) Read and understand texts in detail; c) Utilise information contained in texts; d) Identify suitable responses to texts; e) In more than one type of text.	**Externally set and externally marked end test** One combined reading and writing paper
3. Write a range of texts to communicate information, ideas and opinions, using formats and styles suitable for their purpose and audience.	a) Write clearly and coherently, including an appropriate level of detail; b) Present information in a logical sequence; c) Use language, format and structure suitable for purpose and audience; d) Use correct grammar, including correct and consistent use of tense; e) Ensure written work includes generally accurate punctuation and spelling and that meaning is clear; f) In more than one type of text.	

Scheme of Assessment

To achieve the qualification, learners must be assessed against the Level 1 communication standards for Speaking & Listening and Reading & Writing.

Speaking and Listening

The Speaking and Listening component of the qualification is internally set, internally marked and internally verified by the centre. It is then subject to external moderation by OCN NI. *See Quality Assurance of Centre Performance, page 17*.
Learners must obtain a 'pass' for the Speaking and Listening component to be awarded the qualification.

Skill Standard	Coverage and range	Assessment
Speaking & Listening		**Controlled assessment**
1. Take full part in formal and informal discussions and exchanges that include unfamiliar subjects	a) Make relevant and extended contributions to discussions, allowing for and responding to others' input; b) Prepare for and contribute to the formal discussion of ideas and opinions; c) Use an image to support discussion d) Make different kinds of contributions to discussions; e) Present information/ points of view clearly and in appropriate language	**Assessment tasks** Minimum of two tasks which must include one formal discussion and one informal discussion/exchange. At least one of the discussions/exchanges must be on an unfamiliar subject. **Assessment time** A maximum of 60 minutes to complete all assessment tasks. (Excluding preparatory time) **Assessment evidence** OCN NI checklists/records, completed by the tutor/assessor and annotated as appropriate. Evidence must show that the standards have been met across the full range. Note: Coverage & Range statement b) is applicable to formal discussion tasks only. Coverage & Range statement c) must be assessed in one of the tasks.
Assessment Outcome: Pass or Fail		

Reading and Writing

The Reading and Writing component of the qualification is externally set and marked. It comprises a single paper with two sections: section A assesses the Reading standards and section B assesses the Writing standards.

Learners must obtain a 'pass' for the Reading and Writing component to be awarded the qualification.

Skill Standard	Coverage and range	Assessment
Reading and Writing		
2. Read and understand a range of straightforward texts	a) Identify the main points and ideas and how they are presented in a variety of texts; b) Read and understand texts in detail; c) Utilise information contained in texts; d) Identify suitable responses to texts; e) In more than one type of text.	**Externally set and marked end test** **Combined reading and writing paper** 100% coverage of the 'Coverage and range' Time: 1 hr 30 mins **Section A Reading: 20 Marks** Tasks: 8-10 questions on 2 texts **Section B Writing: 20 Marks** Tasks: 2 written pieces English dictionaries are permitted
3. Write a range of texts to communicate information, ideas and opinions, using formats and styles suitable for their purpose and audience.	a) Write clearly and coherently, including an appropriate level of detail; b) Present information in a logical sequence; c) Use language, format and structure suitable for purpose and audience; d) Use correct grammar, including correct and consistent use of tense; e) Ensure written work includes generally accurate punctuation and spelling and that meaning is clear; f) In more than one type of text.	
Assessment Outcome: Pass or Fail CCEA Regulation requirements stipulate that OCN NI sets the pass mark between 60% and 70%.		

Controlled Assessment

The Speaking and Listening component of the qualification is subject to the CCEA Accreditation Controlled Assessment Regulations for Essential Skills April 2016.

Controlled assessment is a form of internal assessment in which controls levels are set for each stage of the assessment process. These stages are task setting, task taking and task marking.

Task Setting

Speaking and Listening assessment tasks are developed by centres in line with OCN NI Essential Skills – Communication (Controlled Assessment) requirements and based on exemplar tasks supplied by OCN NI. Centres can choose a topic appropriate for the learner/s and the learning context. The learning context includes the availability of and access to resources.

Centres may wish to refer to the 'The Essential Skills Standards and Curriculum for Literacy and Numeracy' for exemplar topics. www.economy-ni.gov.uk/essential-skills-standard

Centres are required to replace the tasks on an annual basis.

Task Taking

Centres must meet the following requirements:

Control	Requirements
Authenticity	Learners must complete all summative assessment tasks under formal supervision by the tutor/assessor. Preparatory work for the tasks may be completed under limited supervision. Tutor/assessors must be able to authenticate the work of learners including individual contributions in collaborative activity.
Feedback	During task taking assessor/tutors may provide limited guidance to a learner. The guidance should be: • appropriate for the level of the qualification • general in nature • intended to control/direct the assessment situation, and • ensure the learner has the opportunity to meet the skill standard and coverage and range statements

Control	Requirements
Time Limit	The guided learning hours for the Speaking and Listening component is approximately 10-15 hrs with a maximum of 15 hrs. The maximum time limit for the completion of all the assessment tasks is 60 minutes. This is exclusive of assessment task preparatory time. Each assessment must be completed in a single session. However different assessment tasks may be completed on different days.
Collaboration	Learners must be assessed on their individual performances. Where there is collaborative activity within the assessment process the tutor/assessor must be able to identify and record individual contributions.
Resources	In setting assessment tasks centres are expected to make appropriate use of the resources available to the centre. Centres must ensure that the learners each have equitable access to the centre's available resources in order to prepare for and undertake their assessment tasks.

Task Marking

OCN NI Essential Skills: Controlled Assessment requirements incorporates details of the requirements for marking. This includes details of:

- the assessment criteria,
- the application of the assessment criteria,
- evidence requirements, and
- record keeping requirements

OCN NI provides training for centres and their Essential Skills Communication tutor/assessors in relation to the OCN NI Essential Skills: Controlled Assessment requirements.

Assessment Guidance

A tutor guide is provided which explains how the Speaking and Listening component must be assessed.

Administration Arrangements

Assessment Opportunities

OCN NI will offer external assessment of Essential Skills as per published dates available on the OCN NI website. https://www.ocnni.org.uk/essential-skills/

Resits

Learners may be entered for external assessment up to three times within the academic year. The assessor should be satisfied that learners have completed sufficient remedial work before being entered for a resit.

OCN NI will take the appropriate precautions to protect the integrity of the qualification and learner achievement by identifying and recording papers taken by individual learners and ensuring through its processes that learners completing a resit will not take the same test.

Assessment Arrangements

Centres must ensure that they comply with the current Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) document 'Instructions for Conducting Examinations'. Further guidance can be obtained from OCN NI's Essential Skills Team.

Centres must ensure that:

- all hard and electronic copies of materials are treated as confidential and stored securely at all times
- external assessments are presented to learners as 'unseen'
- external assessments are completed in an environment that is free from noise/disturbance
- learners are continuously supervised by a suitable and reliable person for the duration of the task. A suitable person cannot include the learners' tutor.
- learners are **not** given any assistance whilst completing the task
- externally marked assessments are carried out under examination conditions

Learners with Particular Requirements

Assessment within OCN NI Essential Skills qualification in Communication at Level 1 is designed to be accessible and inclusive. The assessment methodology is appropriate and rigorous for individuals or groups of learners. If a learner has a particular requirement and access arrangements, please refer to OCN NI Guidance for Centres for Reasonable Adjustments and Special Considerations. This provides

guidance on reasonable adjustments and special considerations that can be accessed to ensure the individual needs of the learner are met.

OCN NI is committed to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. For learners with disabilities who are classified as disabled under the terms of the DDA. OCN NI has set out clear guidelines under reasonable adjustment requirements which provide opportunities for fair assessment which underpins the integrity of independent skills where this is appropriate. (Centres must refer to the OCN NI Essential Skills Handbook for guidance).

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.

Registration

Learners are registered for this qualification online via the OCN NI registration and awards system QuartzWeb. To obtain a username and password for this secure area, please contact a member of the Customer Services Team: customerservices@ocnni.org.uk. Registrations must be processed in line with published dates or agreed timeframe.

Awarding of the qualification

Learners must achieve both the Speaking and Listening and Reading and Writing components to be awarded the qualification.

Certification

Certificates will be sent to centres within 20 working days of verified results. 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 in the centre log-in area on the OCN NI website.

Quality Assurance of Centre Performance

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 continued and consistent practice of quality activities supporting the integrity of the qualification.

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. For the Speaking and Listening component 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; this will be in the form of an Internal Verification Plan.

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
- 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

Standardisation

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

Awarding Organisations offering Essential Skills in Northern Ireland work closely with CCEA 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 materials
- A section on the OCN NI website dedicated to Essential Skills which will include access to NI Essential Skills Curriculum Standards
- Advice on the conduct and administration of Essential Skills qualifications
- Professional development events for assessors and internal verifiers
- Centre briefings/visits
- Support on becoming an accredited centre for Essential Skills

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.

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